

L E T T E R S

U P O N

D I V E R S S U B J E C T S

C O N C E R N I N G

R E L I G I O N

John A N D *Gibson's*

M E T A P H Y S I C S.

Book
1783

Written by the late

Archbishop of CAMBRAY.

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LETTERS

UPON

DIVERS SUBJECTS

CONCERNING

RELIGION



METAPHYSICS

BY THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRIDGE

Translated from the Latin edition of

CLASSICAL

Printed by Robert Taylor, MDCCCL

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following PAPERS, first published at PARIS, in 1718, by the Abbot de Fenelon, nephew to the celebrated Author, contain five Letters. The first concerning the existence of God, the proper worship of God, and the true church: The second, upon the worship of God, the immortality of the soul, and free-will. This was written to the duke of Orleans, the late regent, in answer to three metaphysical questions, which that great prince had put to the archbishop of Cambray, and which are to be seen at the head of the letter. In the third, the author treats of the divinity, and of religion. In the fourth, of the idea of infinity, and the liberty of God to create or not create. And, lastly, the fifth speaks of religion, and the practice of it.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following PAMPHLET, first published at Boston, in 1718, by the Author, is now reprinted by the Author, in a new and improved Edition. The first concerning the existence of God, the proper worship of God, and the true church. The second, upon the worship of God, the immortality of the soul, and free-will. This was written to the Duke of Orleans, the late regent, in answer to three metaphysical questions, which that great prince had put to the academy of Cambridge, and which are to be seen at the head of the latter. In the third, the author treats of the divinity, and of religion. In the fourth, of the idea of infinity, and the liberty of God to create or not create. And, lastly, the fifth speaks of religion, and the practice of it.

DEDICATION
TO
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
DUKE REGENT
OF
FRANCE.

May it please your Grace,

YOUR Royal Highness was graciously pleased, at the same time, to acquaint me, that the birth of some of these letters was due to you, and to grant me the honour of laying them in this public manner at your feet.

WHAT, in the eyes of the world, could I do more advantageous to the memory of their author, than to shew them the great trust your Highness honoured him with in his life-time, and that your Highness still protects his writings after his decease ! All things therefore

DEDICATION.

concur to determine me to offer the whole to your Highness.

THE deep sciences therein contained are so much within the reach of the superior judgment, and uncommon knowledge, of your Royal Highness, that the ablest writers may be proud of your Highness's sentiments, independent of your illustrious birth and great rank in the world. I am therefore fully assured, that this treatise will meet with a general reception, since that part of it, which your Highness has perused, has had your Royal Highness's approbation. And I think myself highly indebted to your Highness for the leave of expressing, upon this occasion, with how much gratitude, zeal, fidelity, and respect, I am,

May it please your Highness,

Your Royal Highness's

Most humble, and

Most obedient Servant,

FENELON.

P R E F A C E,

BY THE

Abbot de F E N E L O N.

THE existence of an infinitely perfect Being; an happy immortality in the admiration of his greatness; a worship consisting in the love of what is most perfectly amiable; are such noble and comfortable ideas, that we ought to wish them true, although it were impossible for us to demonstrate the truth of them. They raise man above himself, by causing him to return all to the Godhead. When he beholds himself, with relation to the supreme Being, he sees himself like a nothing, which ought always to disappear and forget itself before that immense All: but when he reflects upon himself, as on the image of the Godhead, and the object of his complacency, all created beings fly away from before him, as being unworthy to be the end of his love.

And thus, seeing together his own littleness and his greatness, he humbles himself without meanness, and raises himself without pride. All the evils and pleasures of this transitory life appear to him like so many illusions of a dream. He takes the sufferings and adversities for wholesome remedies to cleanse and prepare him for boundless happiness. He looks on riches and greatness, as means given him for no other end, than to make his fellow-creatures happy, by imitating God's communicative goodness. Whatever happens, he always thinks it the best, because he loves that supreme will, which regulates and disposes of all things with wisdom; and that love softens all his pains, and turns his sorrows into joy. He loves all other men like his brethren, sprung from the same origin, and designed for the same happiness. He doth not think himself an independent being, created for his own sake, but a very small parcel of an All, that composes human kind; a member of the same family, whose general good he ought to prefer to his own private interest. It is thus that the belief of what religion teaches us, renders man noble in all his passions, lovely in society, generous in his whole conduct, and peaceable in all his undertakings.

Unbelief, on the contrary, debases and

straitens the soul, destroys in man all those great sentiments and generous ideas. It causes him to refer all to himself. He loves and esteems no-body, but in as much as they are subservient to his unruly passions. Friendship, generosity, all other virtues, which render society sure, easy, and amiable, subsist no longer than he finds his own account by them. Every man's self-love is continually up in arms against that of his neighbour. The happiness of one man causes the unhappiness of a thousand. Ambition, jealousy, hatred, avarice, and contrariety of tempers, render life uncomfortable, and a burden. All human life appear to us but a sad picture, a general confusion, a monstrous medley of contrary and inconsistent passions; and the expectation of another life, which makes us bear patiently the misfortunes of this, is a thing unknown to the unbeliever. His transient pleasures are continually disturbed by the troublesome fear that haunts him, "that possibly there may be a future state." And in this uncertainty, which is the worst of evils, his self-love, an enemy to himself, through an excess of madness, finds a shelter against his terrors nowhere but in the idea of his annihilation, and in the total destruction of what is so dear to

X P R E F A C E.

him; of that self which is his idol, and to which he sacrifices all. What a difference betwixt those two systems! What comparison between the pictures of the righteous and the unbeliever! If religion is a romance, it is a most charming, and a pleasing one.

But thanks to the supreme wisdom; his truths are not only lovely and comfortable; they are moreover evident and demonstrable. There are two ways of proving them. One by dry and abstracted arguments, too refined and intricate for the greatest part of mankind. Those demonstrations may convict the understanding by their evidence, but the will is neither amended nor altered by them.

There are another sort of proofs, which operate on the soul of man, give him a taste of truth at the very sight of it, and which unite clear knowlege and noble passions. Such is the character of the following letters. They were written by a prelate, who endeavoured to make men, at the same time, Christians and philosophers. No less a performance could have been acceptable to those they were directed to. The Great Prince, who was the occasion of some of these Letters, possessed that superiority of knowlege and genius, which rendered useless all other helps to demonstrations purely metaphysical. They could not e-

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scape his penetrating eye. There was need of proofs capable of interesting a great soul, proofs so much the more convincing, as they are simple, open, convincing proofs: I say, whose evidence is no ways obscured by attacking them, which men even suppose true in the bottom and secret corners of their hearts, whilst their understanding labours in vain to doubt of them.

This is the true import of this treatise.

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LETTERS

LETTERS

UPON

DIVERS SUBJECTS

CONCERNING

RELIGION

AND

METAPHYSICS.

LETTER I

*Of the being of a God: of the worship
worthy of him; and of the true church.*

SIR,

YOU need not have made the least
apology for the length of your two
letters; they have both edified and
moved me: I perceive in them the most ex-
tensive candor and sincere love for truth, a

14 LETTERS CONCERNING

solicitous care to find it, a great zeal for religion, and a confidence you put in my willingness to assist you therein. It is true, I seem sometimes resolved to concern myself with nothing but what my function immediately requires at my hands; yet, I am none of those starched bigots, who start at shadows, and are scandalized at every trifle. I am always ready to examine into any system, or to hear any objections proposed: it would be impossible to establish any thing solid, if persons zealous for religion did not freely, and without fear of sinister interpretations, communicate to each other the captious arguments by which some attempt to darken it. What makes me uneasy, is, that I perceive you wrote when under a feverish indisposition. I was in the same condition when I read your letter, which has yet left me very weak: my physicians forbid me all things that require application of mind; yet, I cannot see which way it is possible to answer you, without writing a whole volume. Why cannot I be in your closet with you, and in perfect health, *impertransito media*, as the schoolmen call it? But being, as I hope, on the mending hand, I shall now take the liberty of representing to you my thoughts upon divers points.

1st, I have not, as yet, read the preface, which you have seen: the author of it is a man of great capacity, for whom I have a value: but, abstractedly from what it contains, I own, that the system of Spinoza seems to me easily overthrown; as soon as it is attacked on any side, its pretended chain breaks asunder. According to that philosopher, two men, (one of which says Yes; the other No: the one is in the wrong, the other in the right; the one is a villain, the other a very virtuous good man) are but one individual being. This is what I defy any man in his right senses to believe true in practice. The sect of Spinozists therefore are a sect of liars, and not philosophers. Besides, it is not possible to know the quality of a thing, but as far as you know already the thing qualified. It is necessary to know a coloured body to conceive a colour; a moveable body to conceive the motion thereof, *etc.* So that Spinoza should first of all give us an idea of that infinite substance, which, in its simple and indivisible being, reconciles the most opposite modifications or qualities, one of which is the negative of the other; he must find an infinite multiplication in a perfect unity; he must shew variations and limits in a being

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which is invariable and unlimited. Those are enormous contradictions.

2dly, The modish Free-thinkers of our times do not embrace the system of Spinoza. They value themselves upon their owning a God, Creator of all things, whose wisdom shines in all his works. But according to them, this God could not be accounted good or wise, if he had given man a free-will; that is, the power of sinning, to run astray from his proposed end, to overthrow order, and lose himself eternally. According to them, man imposes on himself, when he fancies he is master of his choice between two contraries. This flattering illusion, say they, proceeds from the will of man's being incapable of constraint in it's proper act, which is it's volition. I cannot be determined by any thing but it's pleasure, which is it's only spring. Between different objects of pleasure, it is always the strongest, that invincibly and infallibly determines it. So that it never willeth, but what pleaseth it most to will. This, in my opinion, forms a liberty which is no better than a ridiculous chimera. Man, say they, is constantly necessitated to will one single object, as much from the inward disposition of his organs, as from the circumstances of external objects on every occasion:

he fancies that he chuses, whilst he is compelled to will always that, which presents itself to him in the most pleasing form. According to this system, by taking away all real liberty, man is neither liable to praise or dispraise, and consequently is freed from all apprehensions of hell. He admires God without fearing him, and lives without remorse, following the impulse of his passions. This is the system which charms all the libertines of our days.

3dly, You are much in the right to require such motives for believing religion, as are proportioned to the simplest and meanest understandings. The difficulty of finding reasons thus proportioned, and yet convincing, tempts you to believe, that God designs salvation to such elect only, whom he draws to him, more by moving their hearts than their understandings; more by the powerful influence of his grace, than by the light of reason. But, pray, observe two inconveniences in this system: the first is, If it be granted, that faith is given to man by the affections only, without the help of reason, and by the blind instinct of grace, without a rational discernment of that authority to which he submits, to believe the mysteries of religion, it would make Christianity a mere phanaticism, and all

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Christians bare enthusiasts. Nothing could be more dangerous for the quiet and happiness of societies and mankind. Nothing can render religion more despicable or hateful.

The second inconveniency is, that according to this system, it would be true, that God damns almost all mankind, because they do not believe, and do not keep all his commandments; although it were equally impossible for them to believe or keep those commandments for want of helps to believe, or fulfil his will proportioned to their want. To give an idea of it so contrary to the goodness of God, would render religion scandalous, and raise all mankind against it.

4thly, St. Austin, who cannot be charged of having been too loose in any of the points relating to God's grace, has thought, that he could not justify the goodness and justice of God, against the blasphemous imputations of the Manichei; but by avowing, that no man is beholden to God for any thing, but "for what he has actually received from him." From whence he infers two things; one is, that every man has received a previous help, and proportioned to his occasions, to overcome the temptations of his concupiscence, to avoid all evil, and to practise what is good, consonant to his understanding. The other,

that he has received talents wherewith to vanquish his ignorance, "in seeking with care and piety, if he wills it," whatever he wants to move him to belief; in which case, providence would furnish him with suitable means to come nearer and nearer to the faith of mysteries, to the virtues of the gospel, and the means of salvation. The internal, as well as the external, means of providence are inexpressible, and of an infinite variety, according to that father of the church. It is as impossible to explain them at large, as it is impossible to describe how a man, by different steps, is arrived to a certain degree of wisdom and virtue, or to the opposite defects and prejudices, *etc.* One reaches thither by the innumerable variety and combinations of education, example, reading, conversation, friends, experience, reflection, and by internal inspirations; by which latter, God insensibly operates on the soul. It would not only be impossible for other men to be very particular in assigning the reasons which have moved another man to a certain course of life, but even that man himself could hardly afterwards trace his way back again, and give a detail of all the motives which, from within and without, have been the springs that determined his affections in his choice. That,

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which every one cannot do for himself, will be God's task at the day of judgment. He will there obtain the victory, because he will unfold to every one all the secret corners of his heart, in a chain of means, by which it was in his own power to seek, and to know truth, to love, to follow it, and therein to find his salvation. These means, though not to be explained singly, are yet very sure all together; their variety, their secret combination, their easily dropping out of our memories, do often bereave us of the distinct knowledge thereof: but then doth not God, who is infinitely just and good, deserve to be credited about the concatenation, and the proportion, of those means which he has prepared? Is he not a better judge of them than ourselves, since we neglect those means so far as scarce ever to regard them? If man, upon waking from his sleep, found himself, on a sudden, in a desert isle, what prodigious pains would he take to find out, if possible, by what hazard he had been carried thither? We come into this world all on a sudden, as fallen from the skies; we neither know what we are, nor whence we came, nor whither we are come, nor with whom we live, nor whither we shall go, upon our departure from hence. Who is it that sheweth the least curiosity in this

important mystery? No-body cares to unravel it. We amuse ourselves with every thing; we want to know all things, except the only one, which, above all things, concerns us. This monstrous laziness is the great sin of unbelief. *Non pie quaerunt*, saith St. Austin. What would not men be capable of, if they were sincere, humble, docile, and as diligent in the enquiry, as so great a good deserves. Do not children, in a very short time, learn to distinguish, and to name things of a common or a necessary use in life, and even a whole language? Do not the rude and boorish people acquire the nicety of all mechanical arts? That is not all: how subtle and profound is man in his search after evil! His understanding seems no where defective, but in his application to what is good. He is only dull in those things which he doth not affect. Love truth as you love money, and you shall come at the bottom of the darkest things. Whenever God shall lay before man all the natural endowments of reason, and all the supernatural helps granted him to believe; when he shall demonstrate, that those gifts would have procured him still greater towards his salvation, if he had not neglected the first; then will he, at one view, behold all those things to which he was blind

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here below. And although this justice of God should be incomprehensible, yet ought we to believe it, without comprehending the same. But man rather chuseth to flatter himself, shake off the yoke, suppose that God is wanting to him, dispute about his free-will; though he cannot be in earnest in his doubts, and to live without law or rule, justifying such his conduct, by laying the blame upon the Almighty.

5thly, It is true, that it is necessary to produce proofs proportioned to the weak and gross apprehension of almost all mankind, to bring them under that authority which proposeth mysteries to them, as the subject of their faith. But let us observe two things; one is, that the most narrow and dull understanding acquires strength, and opens, in proportion, as it delights in things, which it has occasion to know and penetrate into. The other, that we ought to distinguish between that knowledge which apprehends and retains the idea of truth, and that which enables man to go to the bottom of it, and to confute all the vain subtilties that may cloud that truth, which is clear and naked in itself. It is not necessary that every clown should apprehend religion, so well as to answer and clear up all the difficulties, which pride or the

passions cast about it. It is sufficient, that the unlearned believe what is true, upon a true argument; though it be but implicitly known to him. If you reason with a husbandman about the plainest subjects of agriculture, you will certainly puzzle him, he will not be able to answer you; but for all that, you shall not put him out of his right way, and he will continue to plough and manure his lands in the same certain method. This is the case of the unlearned, as to religion.

6thly, It is some time since I thought it necessary to form a plan, containing proofs of the truths necessary to salvation, and those all together, really concluding to the purpose, and proportionate to the capacity of the illiterate. I formerly requested this very earnestly of a great prelate. He often promised it me. I could wish myself capable of performing it. This treatise ought to be very short, though such an undertaking at large would require not only a great labour, but also great talents to execute it rightly. Nothing requires a greater genius, than a work wherein the author is to level all the great and exalted truths, to the capacity of those that have no genius at all. To succeed therein, one must reach every thing, and, at the same time, make a comprehension of the two

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opposite extremes of mankind. One must be understood by the illiterate, and, at the same time, confute the bold criticisms of men who make an ill use of their parts against truth. I can, at present, give you but a very loose and defective idea of that plan; but what I shall lay down of it in haste, and for our private use, is without any consequence; you will easily conceive more of it than what I can set down in a few lines; and see here rather a table of contents than an explanation of the argument.

A proof of the three principal beads necessary to salvation, which ought to subject, to the yoke of faith, the weak and illiterate, without examination.

ARTICLE I.

There is a God infinitely perfect, who has created the universe.

THERE is need only of opening our eyes, and to shake off all prejudices, to perceive, without reasoning, the power and wisdom of the Creator, which shines in all

all his works. If the most learned man opposes this truth, I shall not enter into an argument with him: I shall only desire of him the liberty to suppose, that a storm has cast him on a desert isle; where he finds a house of the best architecture, richly furnished, adorned with pictures of the greatest masters: he goes into a study, where he finds a numerous collection of good books, artfully ranged in their particular classes; yet he meets with no man in that whole island; it behoves me only to ask him, whether it be mere chance, without any industry, which has produced all he beholds. I dare defy him, with his utmost endeavours, ever to satisfy himself, that so vast a number of stones, so artfully disposed, the rich furniture so aptly contrived, so well proportioned to the structure, and decently placed; that those pictures which so finely imitate nature, those books which so exactly treat upon the most sublime subjects and sciences, were only a pure accidental combination: that ingenious man may, perhaps, find out some subtilties to maintain the speculative part of this absurd paradox; but in practice he will find it impossible to entertain any doubt about the industry that shines out in that building. If he should boast of

*See
Palmer
Acad. de
Nat. Dem.
B. II.*

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his being doubtful in it; you may swear he believes his own conscience. That incapacity of doubting is rightly called a full conviction: and here you may, in a manner, see the utmost limits of human reason; it can go no farther. This comparison demonstrates, how we cannot but be convinced of the being of a God, when we look upon this universe. Can any body doubt that this great work doth not shew infinitely more art than the house just mentioned? The difference between a philosopher and a labourer consists in this, that the latter doth immediately embrace and follow, with simplicity, that which strikes his eye-sight; whereas the philosopher, seduced by his vain prejudices, employs all the subtilty of his reasoning to confound his own reason. Behold then, and see here, the being of a God set in its truest light; for every one in his own senses, who is intent, and free of pride and passion, far from having occasion for reasoning, all he has to fear is his subtle reason; he has no more cause to meditate for the finding of a God at the sight of the universe, than to suppose the watch-maker present at the sight of a watch, or the architect, when he sees a house.

Paley

ARTICLE II.

*Christianity only is a worship worthy
of God, or becoming him.*

IT is the Christian religion only whose essential part is, "The love of God." Other religions were grounded on "the fear of the gods," who were to be appeased and courted for their favours, at the expence of solemn adorations, prayers, and offerings. But Christianity, instituted by Jesus Christ, obliges us to love God above ourselves, and to love ourselves only for his sake. The Paradise itself, promised us as a reward, is to be perfect and eternal love. It requireth self-denial, *abneget se ipsum*, which excludes all self-love, to bring us to love ourselves through charity, as something to which God has a proper claim, and which he bids us love in him. This overturning of the whole man is the re-production of order, and the birth of the new man. This is what the industry of man could not have found out. It was necessary that a superior power should turn man against himself, to force him to pronounce

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that thundering sentence against his self-love. Nothing is so evidently just, and yet nothing checks so violently the very soul of man, who is his own idol. It is impossible to honour God sufficiently, but by that supreme love. *Nec colitur ille nisi amando*, saith St. Austin in many places. How cometh it then, that almost all men have herein been mistaken? Instead of offering, and sacrificing themselves, they have carried to the altar burnt-offerings, incense, and other gifts. Tell the most simple and ignorant man, that we must love God the Father who has created us for his sake. This immediately enters his heart, unless pride and self-love make him rebel; he has no occasion to hear debates and particulars upon the argument, he instantly is sensible that therein is contained the whole sum of religion: now, this worship he can only find in Christianity; so that there is no room either for choice or deliberation; all other worship is no religion. The religion of the Jews is but an introduction, or rather but a sketch or shadow of that promised worship: take away, from the law of Moses, the coarse-thread figures, temporal blessings, fat of the earth, celestial dew, mysterious promises, infirmities dispensed with, or tolerated, and the legal ceremonies, there will remain the be-

ginning of Christianity only. Christianity is nothing else than the overthrow of the idolatry of self-love, and the establishment of the true worship of God by supreme love. Enquire narrowly, you will meet with this true worship, unfolded, purified, and perfect, no where but among Christians. They alone know that God deserves eternal love. I do not mention the Turks, they do not deserve it; their religion is no more than the coarsest, most servile and entirely mercenary part of the worship of the most carnal Jews, to which they have added the admiration of a false prophet, who owns himself that he had no certain proof of his being one. Whoever is upright, and poor of spirit, can only abide with Christians, because it is only among them he can meet with perfect love. As soon as he has found it there, he has found all he wanted, and is sensible, that there is nothing more left for him to seek. The mysteries do not scare him; he conceives, that since all nature is impenetrable to his weak understanding, he ought not to be surprized at his not apprehending all the secrets of God; his very weakness makes him strong, his darkness doth enlighten him, to make him distrustful of himself, and docile in God. He doth not

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scruple to believe that God, who is infinite love, has vouchsafed to come himself in a body like unto ours, to temperate the rays of his glory, to teach us to love, and to love himself within us. It is in this sense true, that true religion is discerned by the heart, and not by the understanding. In reality one finds it nakedly or merely through the love of God worthy of infinite love; not through the subtle reasonings of philosophers. Socrates himself had found next to nothing; whereas now an humble poor woman, or a docile mechanic, finds all by finding love. *Confiteor tibi, pater*, etc. The love of God decides all without farther dispute, in favour of Christianity. It is in that sense Tertullian saith, that the soul is naturally Christian.

ARTICLE III.

None but the catholic church can teach this worship, in a manner proportioned to the occasions of all mankind.

ALL men, but more especially the illiterate, have need of an authority to determine, without engaging them into inquiries and debates, of which they are manifest-

ly incapable. How can it be expected, that peasants, and such as are obliged to get their bread by their labour, should examine the original texts, the different editions and translations, and fix the meanings of the bible?

God might be thought to have been wanting to the occasions of almost all mankind, if he had not assigned them an infallible authority to save them that impossible examen, and to prevent their being led into errors.

The illiterate man, therefore, who knows the goodness of God, and is sensible of his own inability, ought to suppose such an authority given by God, and humbly seek it, to submit thereunto without reasoning.

Where shall he find that? All societies, separated from the catholic church, do ground their separation upon their offering liberty to every individual man, to judge for himself, about the sense of the scriptures, and by pretending to show him that the bible doth contradict that antient church. The first step, therefore, which a private man ought to take, before he hearkens to those sectaries, is, to make himself the judge between them and the church, which they have forsaken. Now, where is that sensible rustic, in his own affairs, who, without a ridiculous and scandalous presumption,

*not reg.
Besides, few
I am, of the
I will find
have the do
themselves*

*x It must be rememb^d. that not only the illiterate
but also the learned among the laity are req^d to sub-
scribe to the absolute final^y of the project, tho' less
able to divide on the language of Scripture than they are.*

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ption, can say, I am going to examine, whe-
ther the antient church has well or ill inter-
preted the bible? Yet this is the essential
point, and true cause of the separation of the
branches from the old stem. Every illiterate
x man, who is sensible of his ignorance, ought
to have an aversion to that act of presump-
tion which makes him begin thus. He looks
out for an authority which may save him that
piece of presumption, and the trouble of
that examen of which he is incapable. All
the new sects, according to their fundamen-
tal principle, call to him, read, reason, and
then judge. The catholic church only tells
him, do not reason, do not judge, be satisfi-
ed to be taught, be humble: God has pro-
x mised me his Spirit to preserve you from er-
rors. Which of the two shall this poor illi-
terate man hearken to? Those who require
impossibilities of him, or those who promise
him what is most suitable to his weakness,
and worthy the goodness of his Maker? Let
us behold a paralytic, who wants to get out
of his bed, because his house is on fire; he
addresses five people, who tell him, you must
rise, run away, pierce the crowd, and get you
gone out of the flames; but at last he per-
ceives a sixth,³ who tells him, be not afraid,
trust in me, I will carry you off myself, up-

*So has he promised to each sincere enquirer as well
as to the church collectively. If any man lack
wisdom let him ask God, — and it shall be
given him. —*

*a Who, unfortunately, is paralytic, as well as, perhaps
still more so than himself! —*

on my back: shall he believe the five, who advise him to what he knows himself is impracticable? shall he not rather believe him, who promises that assistance which he knows proportioned and sufficient to his occasion and weakness? Without any farther deliberation, he gives himself up to that man, and resolves to be quiet and governable in his bosom. This is exactly the case of a humble illiterate man; he cannot seriously listen to those sects, who would have him read, reason, and judge, because he finds himself incapable of any of them; but he is comforted, when he hears the antient church say to him, be sensible of your own weakness, humble yourself, be compliant, trust in the goodness of God, who has not left us without the means, and suitable assistance of going to him; let me alone, I will carry you in my bosom: nothing is easier, no way shorter than this, to arrive at truth. The illiterate man has occasion for neither book nor reasoning to find out the true church. With his eyes shut, he knows for certain, that all those churches, who would make him his own judge, are false; and that only that can be the true one, which bids him believe with humble submission. Instead of books and reasoning, he wants

*Yes, thanks
to the popish
system -*

*How different this from the language of scripture,
If thou be wise thou shalt be wise for thyself.*

*x Humility, and an emotional, slavish dependence on
fellowmen - are very different things.*

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nothing but his own weakness and the goodness of God, to avoid being seduced by flattering insinuations, and to remain in the state
x of an humble compliance. He wants only to be rightly sensible of his ignorance to be determined: this ignorance stands him in stead of infallible science. The more ignorant he is, the more doth his ignorance tell him how absurd those sects are, who would set him up for a judge of things he is not able so much as to examine. On the other hand, the learned themselves have numberless occasions of being humble and sensible of their own instabilities. The more they reason, the more they doubt, even more than the illiterate: they dispute among themselves for ever, and grow obstinate and tenacious of the most absurd doctrines. So that they have as much occasion, as the most ignorant people, for a supreme authority, to humble their presumption, amend their prejudices, determine their disputes, fix their uncertainties, reconcile them to each other, and unite them with the multitude. That authority, superior to all reasoning, where shall we find it? It cannot be in any of those sects, which are formed only by causing men to reason, and making them judges of the scripture above the church. It cannot, therefore, be found any

where, but in that antient church, which is called the catholic church. What is more simple, shorter, more adapted to the weak understandings of the vulgar than a decision? For the apprehending of which, there is only need of feeling one's ignorance, and not to attempt impossibilities. Abandon that examen which is visibly impossible to you, and a ridiculous conceit, and you will find yourself immediately a good catholic. *(by coming down to the level of the unthinking idiot)*

I apprehend very well, Sir, that innumerable difficulties will be started at what I have here laid down: but are there none raised to make us doubt the very being of bodies, and question the certainty of things we really behold, which we hear and feel every moment, as if our whole life was but the illusion of a dream? I dare avow, that in the three principles I have laid down, enough will be found to dissipate all objections in a few words, and without entering into any intricate or subtle debates.

Yet I cannot end this letter, Sir, without not intimating, that you do not seem to have a sufficient value for St. Austin. It is true, that father wrote in an age of a very indifferent taste; his style shews it; he has wrote without any order, hastily, with a luxuriancy of thought, and, chiefly, when he was urged.

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to it by his occasions of instructing, or refuting his adversaries. Plato and Des Cartes, whom you so highly value, had leisure to meditate, without disturbance, and bring their works to perfection: yet have those two authors their failings: for example, what can be more weak than the proofs which Socrates alleges for the immortality of the soul?

Besides, is he not wavering and unfixed about some of the most fundamental truths, without the certainty of which his moral precepts lose their aim? What is more defective than the infinite world of Des Cartes? If a collection was made of all the true sayings of St. Austin, scattered loosely throughout his works, there would be more metaphysics found than in those two authors. I cannot cease to admire the extent, the clearness and fertility of that sublime genius.

I wish, Sir, I could be for one month with you in a lonesome place, where we might have nothing else to do but to search together what might feed and edify our souls. *Orus, quando ego te aspiciam, quandoque licebit, etc.*

No body can honour you with more lively sentiments, and more worthy of you, than I shall do the remainder of my days.

CHAPTER
LETTER II.

*Concerning the worship of God, the
immortality of the soul, and the free-
will of man.*

SIR,

THE paper, you have done me the
honour to send me, contains three
queries.

1st, Can the infinitely perfect Being require
any worship from beings that are infinitely
inferior to him?

2^{dly}, Is it possible to demonstrate, that
the soul of man is immortal?

3^{dly}, Is it consistent to believe, that the
infinitely perfect Being has given man a free-
will, which includes a liberty of oversetting
order?

Without producing it for his own sake, that
therein he should be more imperfectly than
the imperfect beings, who act for the love of
him. There are men, whose imperfect be-
ings! who, in all their works, propose to
themselves no other end, than to please that

CHAP. I.

*The infinitely perfect Being doth require
a worship from all intelligent creatures.*

THE truth of the existence of the infinitely perfect Being is so clear, and so fruitful a principle, that we need only consult it without prejudice, and follow it sincerely, to find therein all we want to know of that necessary Being. And here, in my opinion, you see the truths to be drawn from it.

I.

WE cannot reasonably doubt, that so perfect a Being doth love himself: for being just, he owes an infinite love to his infinite perfection. Hence I infer, that if this Being should produce any work besides himself, without producing it for his own sake, that therein he should act more imperfectly than the imperfect beings, who act for the love of him. There are men, those imperfect beings! who, in all their works, propose to themselves no other end, than to please that

perfect Being. If, therefore, the perfect Being did unjustly refuse, to himself, the end of his actions to his own advantage, which the imperfect beings aim at in their actions, he would act less perfectly than pious men; which is utterly impossible. We ought, therefore, to conclude, with the Bible, *That God has made all things for his own sake.* On the one hand he is infinitely perfect in himself: on the other hand infinitely just, because justice is part of the infinite perfection. He owes, therefore, to himself all what he doth, and it is not lawful for him to give away any of his rights. Such is his greatness, that he can act for no other than himself. He calls himself *the jealous God*. Jealousy, which is unbecoming and ridiculous in man, is supreme justice in God. He saith, as he ought, *I will not give my glory to another.* He owes himself, and pays all to himself. All proceeds from him; all ought to return unto him; otherwise order would be destroyed. The author of the paper sent me acknowledges, that the all-perfect Being has drawn men from nothing; he ought likewise to own that that Being has created them for himself. If he acted without any end, he would act in a blind and senseless manner, wherein his wisdom could have no share. If he acted for an

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end, less exalted than himself, he would debase his action below that of every virtuous man who acts all for the supreme Being. It would be absurdity itself. Let us therefore conclude, without fear of mistaking, *that God has made every thing for his own sake.*

THAT supreme Being, which we call God, cannot have created the intelligent beings for his own sake, without willing, at the same time, that those beings should employ their understandings to know and to admire him; and their will to love and obey him. The order or justice of things requires that our intelligence be regulated, and our love be just; it is necessary, therefore, that God, who is the supreme order and justice, should will that we love his infinite perfection more than our own bounded perfection; and that we should love his infinite goodness above the finite goodness which he has endowed us with. This is the true and rational love of justice; we are only limited, partaking and depending good beings; whereas the first Being is the only goodness, the spring of all others, unlimited and independent. Our love for that goodness ought likewise in us to be a love

the only spring of all other love, a love without bounds, and a love independent from all other love. On the contrary, the love of ourselves ought to be a love void of that primitive love; only a smaller rivulet derived from that great river, a love substitute to it, a limited love, and proportioned to the small parcel of goodness which is fallen to our share. God is the all, and we are the nothing, that have borrowed a small parcel of that Being to cover ourselves with. We do not belong to ourselves, but to him that has made us, and who has given us all, even that which we call myself; that self, which is so dear to us, and commonly our only God, is, properly speaking, but a small part, that would be the whole. It brings all things to itself, and therein doth imitate God, and sets itself up for an idol: that idol must be destroyed. We must bring that self lower, and put it in its right place again, which is but a small corner of the universe in proportion to the little perfection and being it possesses.

He will come into his rank again to be esteemed and beloved according to his true merit. And this is the love of justice, this is order. This is what God owes to himself: this is what is just he should require of his creature capable of knowing and loving. It

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is needful that, in creating it, he should propose, as the end of his work, to make himself known as infinite truth, and to make himself beloved as universal goodness; so that may be known in him all community of his truth, and beloved in him all community of goodness without bounds. As soon as that foundation is laid, the whole building will rise as of itself. As soon as you shall suppose, that God alone ought immediately to have all our love, and that afterwards this love doth spread upon that self, only in the same manner as other limited goods in proportion to its limits; then will religion be wholly unfolded in our hearts. You may even leave man to his own heart, if it appears that he loves himself only with that love of God, and that self-love is laid aside.

III.

This being agreed on, there remains no farther question about the worship of God. There is no other worship besides love, says St. Austin; *nec colitur nisi amando*. It is the kingdom of God within ourselves; it is the worshipping in spirit and in truth; it is the only end for which God has made us. He has given us love for no other end than

that we should love him. We must re-establish order by overthrowing that disorder which has prevailed. We must put God, which is the all, in the room which self did occupy, as if it had been the all, the centre, and universal spring. That self must be tied down, in it's small corner, as a weak and small parcel of the borrowed goodness. At the same time we must restore to God the place of the all, and be ashamed to have used him so long like a private being, with whom we would make terms, as betwixt equals, to unite or not unite ourselves with him, to make one's own bargain, or else to look out for some other ally.

In a word, we must place God in the room of that self, which it occupied without shame, and put self in that small place where we had reduced God to, after having made him little in comparison to that self. Bring it about that men think thus, and all doubts are vanquished, all the rebellions of mens heart are subdued, and all pretences of impiety and irreligion are defeated. I do not enter into reasonings, I ask nothing of man: I give him up to his love; let him love with all his heart what is lovely without bounds, and let him do what he pleases; and I am sure, that what will please him, cannot be any thing

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but the most pure religion. This is the perfect worship; *nec colitur nisi amando*. He will do nothing but love and obey. *The nation of the just, saith the scripture, is nothing but obedience and love.*

IV. It will be objected, that this love is an inward worship. But where must we look for the external one? Why shall we suppose that God doth require it? But is it not obvious, that the external worship is a necessary consequence of the internal worship, love?

Shew me a society of men who look on each other, as being altogether but one and the same family, the father of which is in heaven. Shew me men, who live only by love of that heavenly Father, and love neither their neighbour nor themselves, but for love of him, and who are but one heart and one soul; do not you think, that in this godly society, the mouth will incessantly speak from the fullness of the heart? They will admire the all-high, they will love the all-good; they will sing his praises, they will bless him for all his bounties; they will not stop there, they will make him known to all the nations of the universe; they will endeavour to help

up their brethren, as soon as they shall find them tempted by pride, or any carnal passion, to abandon the well-beloved. They will sigh to find the least cooling or abatement of love. They will cross the seas to the remotest parts of the world, to make the common Father known and beloved to the forlorn people that have forgot his greatness. What is it you call an external worship, if this is not one? Then would God be all things in all; he would be the King, Father, and universal Friend; he would be the living law of the hearts. All the discourses would be concerning him and for him; he would be consulted, believed, and obeyed. Alas! if a mortal king, or a father of a mean family, through his wisdom, acquires the esteem and confidence of all his children, one sees nothing else besides honours that are paid him; there is no occasion to ask where is his worship, or whether any is due to him; all what is done to honour him, to obey him, and acknowledge his favours, is a continual worship in every body's view. What would it be then if men were possessed with the love of God? Their society would be a solemn worship, like that which is described to us of the blessed in heaven.

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It may be replied, that it is needful to prove, that besides love, and virtues necessarily adhering to it, man owes to God public and regulated ceremonies; but those ceremonies are not the essential part of religion, which consists in love, and the practice of virtue. Those ceremonies are instituted not as being the essential part of religion, but only to serve as signs which show it and nourish it in itself, and help to communicate it to others. Those ceremonies are in respect to God what the tokens of respect are to a father, whom his children salute, embrace, and serve with earnestness; or to a king who is harangued, placed on a throne, surrounded with a certain grandeur, and to strike the imagination of the people still more, before whom the great ones kneel. Is it not true, that men commonly tied and attached to visible objects, and whose reason is weak, have yet greater need of a shew to imprint in them a suitable respect for an invisible majesty, and contrary to all their passions, than to produce that effect for a visible one, who startles their eyes and flatters their sensual passions? One feels the necessity there is of a court for a king,

and yet is unwilling to own the much greater occasion of a pomp for divine service. This may be filed, not knowing the occasions of mankind, and to stick at circumstances, when the principal point is yielded.

AND do we not see, that all nations who have adored any divinity, have fixed their worship to some external demonstrations, called ceremonies. As soon as the internal worship is admitted, the external is requisite to express it, and communicate it to society. Human-kind did offer sacrifices and gifts till the times of Moses. Moses did institute ceremonies in the religion of the Jews. The Christian church has received some from Jesus Christ. No matter whether beasts are killed, incense burnt, or the fruits of the earth be offered, provided men have signs by which they express their love of God. All the products of the earth are his own gifts to us; to offer, is only returning what we have received; making an acknowledgement that we had it all from him. By those signs we call to mind God's majesty and his bounty; we excite each other to prayers and praises of him, and to put our hopes in him; we endeavour

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at a certain uniformity of signs, to show the union of our hearts, and to prevent disorders in the common worship. When God has not regulated those ceremonies in his written laws, men have followed tradition, going back to the very beginning of the world: when God has regulated those ceremonies by written laws, men have been bound to observe them inviolably. Even the Protestants, who have found so much fault with our ceremonies, have been obliged to retain many of them: so constant a truth it is, that men have occasion for some. There is need of ceremonies, not such as amuse or impose upon us, but such as are a help to recollect ourselves, and call to our minds the memory of God's favours. This is the true worship of God. Whoever has another idea of it is mistaken, and entertains wrong notions of it.

VII.

LET any one now compare these two schemes. In the one each man acknowledging the true God, would honour him inwardly after his own manner, without giving any sign or mark thereof to the rest of mankind. In the other, men have a common worship,

by whose help every one recollects himself, feeds his love, edifies his brethren, makes God known to such of mankind who had no knowledge of him, or have lost it. O how lovely and moving is that spectacle! Is it not plain, that the second scheme is a thousand times more worthy of the perfect Being, and more adapted to the occasions of mankind than the first? Whoever shall have taken a true resolution to prefer God to himself, and to carry the yoke of the Lord, will never hesitate between these two.

*Is it indeed
so plain that
it is a worship
of God in the
Spirit? —*

No, certainly not. —

VIII.

It is objected, that God is infinitely above man; that there is not the least proportion between them; that God has no occasion for our worship; lastly, that this worship of a limited will is unworthy of a Being infinite in his perfections. It is true, that God has no manner of occasion for our worship, without which, he is happy, perfect, and all-sufficient to himself: but, if he wills and commands that worship; which, though imperfect, is not unworthy of him; and it can only be for that very worship that he has created us; when the question is to know, what doth or

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doth not become the infinite Being, we ought not to pretend to penetrate into it with our short-sighted and weak reason. The finite beings cannot comprehend the infinite. It is from the infinite himself we ought to learn what he may will or not will. Now, we have plain fact to determine this. On the one hand, we cannot doubt that the infinite Being has created us; on the other, we see plainly, that in creating us he could not have a more noble and exalted end than that of being known and beloved by us. It is in vain to allege, that this knowlege and limited love are an end not at all proportioned to the infinite perfection of God. However imperfect that end may be, yet it is the most perfect that God could propose to himself by creating us. To make the thing easy, and remove all difficulties, we must distinguish between what the creature can do, and the complacency of God therein. The action of the creature, which knows and loves God, is always necessarily imperfect like the creature itself that doth it. It is always infinitely below God. But that action, of knowing and loving God, is the noblest, and the most perfect operation which God can draw from his creature, and which he can propose to himself as the end of his work. If God could not produce, out

of nothing, any creature, but upon condition to draw therefrom some work as perfect as God himself, he then could never pretend to produce any creature out of nothing; for there can never be any that shall be or become capable of performing any action equally perfect with God himself.

The fact, however, is beyond all doubt, that God has created all things out of nothing; his perfection in his productions requires he should have proposed to himself to draw out of his creatures the most noble and perfect operation, which their narrow and bounded nature was capable of. Now, this most perfect operation of human-kind, is the knowledge and love of God: what God produces from man can be but imperfect, as man himself is: yet God draws from him the most perfect work which he is any ways able to afford: and it is sufficient, for the maintaining of order, that God should draw, from his creature, the best he can, within the limits he has fixed the same. Then he is pleased and satisfied with his production. His power has effected what his wisdom requires. He takes delight in his creature, and that very delight is the end which he proposeth to himself. Now, this complacency or delight is not distinguished from himself; so that, properly

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speaking, he is himself his own end. The accomplished action of his own creature is but the subject of his complacency; it is wisdom in which he pleaseth himself; and this complacency is equally with him, infinitely perfect, since it is equally just and wise.

IX.

WE cannot doubt but that mankind knows God, and that many among them do love him, or at least have a desire to love him. It is, therefore, as clear as the sun, that it was God's will to make himself known and beloved; for if God had been unwilling to communicate to us the knowledge and love of him, we could never have either known or loved him. I may therefore ask, wherefore has God given us the capacity of knowing and loving him? Certainly it is the most precious of all his gifts. Has he granted it to us in a blind manner, without reason, by mere chance, without designing we should make any use of it? He has given us corporeal eyes to see the light of the sun; shall we believe that he has given us the eyes of the mind, which are capable of discerning his eternal truth, without willing that the same should be known to us? I own, we can neither know nor love infinitely the

infinite perfection. Our highest knowlege will always remain infinitely imperfect in proportion to the infinitely perfect Being. In a word, though we do know God, it can never be but with a limited knowlege; but we know him thus far, that we are sure in pronouncing what he is not, that we ascribe to him such perfections, as are suitable to his dignity, without being in danger of mistaking. There is no other being in nature, which we confound with God, and we know how to describe him with his character of infinite, which is only one, and not communicable. It seems we know him pretty distinctly, since the clear idea we have of him doth force us to prefer him to ourselves. Such an idea, which goes so far as to dethrone self, must work very powerfully on man, blindly fond of himself, to adoration. Never was idea so hardly struggled with, and yet came off with such vigor. Let us judge of its strength by what it forces us to own against ourselves. Nothing is so surprizing as the idea of God, which I carry at the bottom of my heart within myself; it is an infinite, contained in a finite being. What I have within myself doth exceed me without measure. I do not comprehend, how I can contain him within

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my mind, and yet I do. It is needless to examine how I can keep him within that narrow compass, since the fact is plain, and not to be denied. This incomprehensible idea of the divine Being, not to be blotted out, is that which makes me his resemblance notwithstanding my imperfection and lowness. As he doth know and love himself infinitely, I do know and love him according to my measure. I cannot know the infinite but with a finite knowlege, and I can only love him with a finite love, as myself; yet I know him as being infinite, and I will and endeavour to love him with the greatest love he has made me capable of. I wish it was in my power to put no bounds to my love for a perfection which has no bounds. Once more; it is true, that neither this knowlege nor this love have a perfection equal to their object; but that man, who knows and loves God, according to his measure of knowlege and love, is incomparably more worthy of that perfect Being, than that man, who should be as without a God in this world, never solicitous either to know or to love him. Herein you see two different plans of God's work; the one is as worthy of his wisdom and of his goodness as we can conceive it, the other is unworthy of both, and has no manner of

rational end. It is easy to conclude which of these two plans God has followed.

X.

WHEN a man humbleth himself, he only seeks to be independent, it is a deceitful and hypocritical humility. Whilst he is magnifying to himself his lowliness, his nothingness, and the infinite disproportion which is betwixt God and himself, it is with no other view than to shake off God's yoke, and to set himself up for a sort of a little divinity of his own liking; by satisfying all his inordinate passions, and making himself the center of every thing about him. Man is glad to place God in an infinite height and distance above him, whence he doth not deign either to observe us, make us instruments of his glory, interest himself in us, or concern himself about us, to correct us, perfect us, reward us, or punish us. But is it not apparent, that the infinite distance, between God and us, doth not hinder him from being always about and within us; and that it is even that perfection in which he exceeds us infinitely, which enables him to do and operate every thing in us, and to be nearer to us than we are our-

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selves? How is it possible that he, who makes our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our understandings to know, and our will to love, should not be intent upon every thing, which he operates within us? How can it be he should not interest himself in what he takes care every moment to produce in us? That attention costs nothing to an infinite wisdom and goodness. In that, every thing is action, every thing is rest. We would fain conceive a God so far distant from us; so haughty, and so indifferent in his haughtiness, as to disdain to watch over mankind; so that every one of us, without being under any constraint from his looks, might live without rule, following the dictates of his passions and pride. By pretending thus to raise God, we degrade him; for we make of him a God indifferent as to good or evil, the virtues or vices of his creatures, the disorder or order of the world, which he has framed. By seeming to humble ourselves, we make ourselves gods, we overthrow all subordination, we give ourselves the loose, promise ourselves impunity, and we attempt to place ourselves even above our reason.

Once more, compare these two plans, the one offering us a God, wise, good, watchful; who ranks, directs, rewards; who will be

known, beloved, and obeyed: the other presents us a God not at all concerning himself with our behaviour, affected with neither virtue nor vice, nor with reason violated, or conformed to, by his creatures; who gives man up to his mad pride and all his brutal desires; who neglects him after he has made him, and doth not care to be either known or beloved by him, though he hath given him all the sufficient faculties to do both. Compare these two plans, and I defy you not to prefer the first to the second.

CHAP. II.

The soul of man is immortal.

THIS question will easily be put in a clear light, if it be but reduced to it's true terms, and separated from what is of a farther extent.

I.

It is true, that the soul of man is not a being depending on itself, or having a necessary existence. There is but one Being which

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has an existence of itself, can never lose that same, but doth communicate it to all others according to it's own pleasure. God would have no need of acting any thing to annihilate the soul of man. He need only cease for a moment, or suspend the action by which he continues it's creation at every moment, to plunge the same again into the abyss of non-existence and nothingness, whence he drew it; just as a man needs only to let fall his hand to drop a stone which he held up in the air, that instantly falls by it's own weight. So that the rational query is not here to know, whether the soul of man can be annihilated in case it should so please God; for it is apparent that it may so be; and that it entirely depends on the will of God.

II.

The soul immaterial.

THIS question is to know, whether the soul has in itself natural causes of corruption or destruction. which put a period to it's existence after a certain time; and whether it can be philosophically demonstrated, that the soul has in itself no such causes. See here the negative proof of it. As soon as you have established the most real and solid difference between the body and soul, you are vastly

surprized at their union; and it is only by the medium of God's might you can conceive how he could unite and cause a harmony in the actions of two so different natures. Bodies do not think; souls are neither divisible, extended, figurated, nor endowed with bodily faculties. Ask any sensible person, whether his present thought be round or square, white or yellow, hot or cold; divisible in six or in twelve different parts; instead of giving you a serious answer he will laugh at you. Ask him, if the atoms, of which his body is made up, be wise or foolish, if they know each other, if they be virtuous, have a friendship for each other; if the round atoms have more wit or goodness than the square ones; he will laugh again, because he will not be able to believe that you are serious in the enquiry after those inconsistencies. Go yet farther with him; suppose atoms of the figure he shall fix upon, desire him to make them as minute as ever he pleases, and ask him whether, at last, he has a prospect of that point of time, when those atoms, which had no knowlege at all before, shall, all on a sudden, begin to know each other, to know all that is about them, and to say, within themselves, I do believe this, but I do not believe that; I love such an object, but I hate the other. He will think

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you ask him childish questions; he will laugh at them, as at the most extravagant metamorphoses or fables. The ridiculousness of the queries shews perfectly well, that none of all the properties of a body enter into the notions we have of a spirit or a thinking being; and on the contrary, none of the properties of a spirit enter into the idea we have of a body or an extended being. The real distinction, and the entire dissimilitude of the nature of those two beings being thus settled, no man ought to be surprized that their union (which consists only in a sort of harmony or mutual relation between the thoughts of the one and the motions of the other) should have an end, without either of those beings being dissolved or ceasing to exist. There is more reason to wonder how two beings, different in their natures, can continue together any time, and act in concert. Why shall any one, therefore, conclude, that one of those beings must be annihilated, as soon as they cease to be united, since their union was, in all appearance, so unnatural? Let us fancy two bodies absolutely of the same nature; part them, you destroy neither; besides, the existence of the one can never prove the existence of the other, nor the annihilation of the one the destruction of the other. Though

they be supposed alike in all things, their real difference suffices to demonstrate, that they can never be the cause of each other's existence or annihilation: because the one is not the other, it may exist or be annihilated without the other body. Their difference occasions their mutual independance. If we must reason thus of two bodies, which have been parted and are entirely of the same nature, with how much more reason ought we to argue thus of a spirit and a body, whose union is no ways natural, their natures being altogether so unlike in every circumstance! On the one hand, the discontinuation of an union, so accidental to both their natures, can be to neither a cause of annihilation; on the other hand, the very annihilation of one of those two beings, would, in no ways, be the reason or cause why the other should likewise be annihilated. A being, which is no ways the cause of the other's existence, cannot be the cause of it's destruction. It is, therefore, as clear as the day, that the dis-union of the body and soul cannot cause the annihilation of either the soul or the body; and that even the annihilation of the body doth not contribute any thing towards putting a period to the being of the soul.

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III.

THE union of the body and soul, consisting only in a harmony or mutual relation between the thoughts of the one, and the motions of the other; it is easy to conceive what the discontinuation of that harmony must occasion. The harmony is not natural to those two beings, so much unlike, and so independent of each other. There could not even be a less power than God himself, who, by a will altogether arbitrary and almighty, could subject two beings so widely different in their natures and operations to that harmony for acting together. Suppose that almighty and uncontrollable will of God suspended, that forced harmony, if I may call it so, is immediately suspended likewise; as a stone falls with it's own weight, soon as the hand that kept it up in the air is removed from it, each of these two parts re-assumes it's natural independency towards the other. It must follow from thence, that the soul, far from being annihilated by the breach of that union, which only puts her again into her own natural state, is then free to think independently from all the motions of bodies; in the same manner as I am free to walk alone as soon as I have

been loosened from another man to whom a superior force did keep me chained. The end of that union is only a disengagement and a liberty, as the union was but a bond and a mere subjection; then ought the soul to think independently from all the motions of the bodies, in the same manner as the Christian religion supposes that the angels, who were never united to bodies, do think in heaven. Why should we, therefore, apprehend the annihilating of the soul upon that separation, which can produce nothing less than an entire liberty of thinking.

IV.

THE body, on the other hand, is not annihilated; the very minutest atom doth not perish. In what we call death, nothing more happens than a simple displacing of organs; the most subtle and refined bodies do exhale; the machine is dissolved and it's harmony destroyed. But however the parts of it be scattered up and down the world, either by accidents or corruption, none ever ceases to have and keep a being; and all philosophers agree, that not so much as the vilest or most imperceptible atom in the universe is ever annihilated. To what purpose then should any one fear

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the annihilation of that other most noble and thinking substance, called soul? How can any one imagine, that the body, which is never annihilated, should destroy the soul more noble than itself, a stranger to it, and absolutely independent from it? The dis-union of those two beings can no more operate the annihilation of the one than of the other. It is readily granted, that no atom of the body doth perish at the time of the separation of those two parts. What is the reason then, that men are so busy in finding out pretences for believing that the soul, which is infinitely more perfect, is destroyed? It is true, that at any time God is almighty and sufficient to destroy it, if he pleases; but there is no reason to believe that he wills it rather at the time of it's separation from, than of it's union with, the body. What is called death being only a disordering of the corpuscula which compose the organs, it cannot be said that this disorder happens as well in the soul as in the body. The soul, as it is a thinking being, has none of the bodily properties; it has neither parts, nor figure, nor sight of the parts in relation to each other, nor motion or change of sight. So that no kind of disorder can happen to it. The soul, which is the thinking self, and the willing self, is a

simple being in itself, and not divisible. There is never, in the same man, two selfs, nor two halves of the same self. The objects are conveyed to the soul by divers organs which are the different sensations; but all these different channels terminate in one only centre where they all unite. It is the self which is one in so strict a sense, that it is through that only that each man has a true unity, and is not several men. We cannot say of that self, which thinks and wills, that it has different parts joined together, as the body composed of different limbs joined together. This soul has neither figure, sight, local motion, nor colour, nor heat, nor hardness, nor other sensible quality. We neither see, hear, nor feel the same; we only conceive that it thinks and wills, as it is the nature of the body to be extended, divisible, and of a particular figure. As soon as we admit the real difference betwixt body and soul, we must, without the least doubt, conclude, that the soul is neither compounded, nor divided, nor figured, nor fitted, because of it's parts, and consequently has no disposition of organs. As for the body, which is organized, it may be disjointed, alter it's figure, and lose it's harmony; but the soul can never

*Vide. At
Stallers
"Four Men"*

*feel, i.e.
by the body
organs -*

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lose that order it had, not, and which doth not suit it's nature.

V.

WE might say, that as the soul was created for no other end than to be united with the body, it is so much limited to that society, that it's borrowed existence ceases, as soon as it's society with the body determines. But this is talking in the air, and without any proof, to suppose the soul was created to exist no longer than exactly as soon as it should continue united with the body. Whence have any authority to assert so uncouth a thought? And, what right have they to suppose this, without producing proofs of it? The body is certainly less perfect than the soul; since it is a greater perfection to think, than not to think: yet we see that the existence of bodies doth not determine with the duration of it's society with the soul: after death has broke the bones of that union, that body still exists, even in it's minutest particles. We see only two things; the one, that the body is divided and dismembered: this cannot happen to the soul, which is simple, without disposition of parts. The other, that the body is no longer moved dependant-

ly from the thoughts of the soul: ought we not, therefore, to conclude, that in the same manner, and with much more reason, the soul continues to exist on it's part, and that it then begins to think independantly from the operations and motions of the body? The operation follows the existence, as all philosophers agree. Those two natures are independent from each other, not only as to their natures, but their operations. "As the bo-

"dy has no occasion for the thoughts of the
"soul, to be moved; the soul has no need
"of the motions of the body, to think." It

X was only by chance, that those two unlike beings, and so independent, ~~form~~ from each other, were subjected to operate harmoniously. The end of their transitory society lets them operate freely, each according to it's proper nature, which has no manner of relation with the other.

from

*is not by the necessity of their very nature,
but by Divine ordinance. — Kanauget*

VI.

In short, the question is only to know, whether God, who has it entirely in his choice to annihilate the soul of man, or to continue it's existence to eternity, has declared himself to will either it's annihilation or preservation. There is not the least likeli-

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hood, or any reason, that can induce us to believe, that he would annihilate the soul, who doth not annihilate the least atom in the whole universe. It is no ways likely that he would annihilate the soul at the very moment in which he separates it from the body, since it is a being wholly a stranger to that body, and independent of it. This separation being no more than the end of it's subjection, and to it's acting in concert with the body; it is evident, that this separation is the deliverance of the soul, and not it's annihilation. We must, however, own, that we should be forced to believe that annihilation, though never so extraordinary, and so difficult to conceive, had God himself revealed it to us in his word. That which depends entirely on his free-will and choice, cannot come to our knowledge but from himself. Those, therefore, who will believe the mortality of the soul, against all probability, ought to make it out to us, that God has so expressly declared it, as to leave no room for doubt. It is no ways incumbent on us to prove, that God will not effect this annihilation. It is enough for us to suppose, that the soul of man, which is the most perfect of the beings we know, next to God, ought much less to lose it's existence, than so

many other lower beings which surround us. Now, the annihilation of the least atom, in the whole universe, since the creation, is yet unprecedented. Therefore it is sufficient for us to suppose, that the soul of man is, as well as the least atom, out of all danger of being annihilated. This, of all prejudices and suppositions is the most rational, the most certain, and most decisive. It ought to be the task of our adversaries, to rob us of this advantage, by clear and decisive arguments. They cannot possibly prove the contrary, but by a positive declaration from God himself. When a man, in all probability, ought to think, in favour of his most intimate friend, what he, on all occasions, thinks in favour of the least of mankind, and of those who are the most indifferent to him; every body has a right to conclude, that he actually doth think the same in favour of that intimate friend; unless he expressly declares the contrary. Besides, his will, being intirely free, cannot be known but to himself. When I can either go out of my room, or stay in it; no-body but myself can acquaint my servants with the free resolution I have taken thereupon, chusing either the one or the other. It is evident, therefore, that our adversaries ought to prove it to us, by some express de-

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claration of God himself, that he has, in a particular manner, excepted the soul of man out of his general law, not to annihilate any being, and to preserve the existence of the least atom. Let them, therefore, either be silent hereafter, or produce such a declaration of God for making that exception to his general law.

VII.

WE produce the bible, which carries all the tokens of it's author, God, since it is that which has taught us to know, and, to the utmost of our power, to love the true God. It is in that book that God speaks so much like a God, when he says, *I am, that I am*. No other book has drawn God in a manner worthy of him. The gods of Homer are a ridicule, and a shame to divinity. The book, which we are speaking of, after having shown God as he really is, teaches us the only worship that is worthy of him. It is not required of us to appease him with victims; but to love him more than ourselves; to love ourselves, but for his sake, and with his pure love. We must forsake ourselves for his sake, and prefer his will to our own. The love of him must work in us all virtues, and shut

out all vices. It is that entire change of man's heart, which man could never have imagined of himself. He never would have invented a religion which robs him even of his own understanding and will, and makes him entirely dependent on another. And whenever that religion is proposed to him, with the most absolute authority, his mind cannot conceive it, his will rebels, and all his faculties are exasperated. There is no occasion to wonder at it; since it requires no less than unthringing the whole man, degrading that dear self, breaking that idol, forming a new man, and to place God in the room of that self, to make it the spring and center of all our affections and love. As often as man shall go about to frame a religion, you may be sure that he will make it very different. Self-love will dictate it. He will make it, in all respects, suit his own purposes; whereas this other leaves him nothing; yet is this so just, that the very things which make us the most averse to it, ought, most of all, to convince us of it's truth. God is all, to whom all is due. The creature is nothing, to whom nothing ought to be left; but what is referred to God, and for the sake of God. All religion which reaches not so far, is unworthy God; doth not new mould man, and carries apparent marks of

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falsity. There is on earth but one original book, which makes religion consist in loving God more than one's self, and to forsake one's self for God's sake. All others, that repeat this great truth, have borrowed it out of this. All truth is taught us in this fundamental truth. The book which has thus made known to the world the whole of God, the nothingness of man, together with the worship of love, can have no other author but God. Either there is no religion at all, or this is the only true one. Moreover, this book is so God-like in it's doctrine, full of prophecies, the fulfilling of which are apparent to the eyes of all the world, particularly those concerning the abandoning of the Jews to the hardness of their hearts, and the calling in of the Gentiles to the worship of the true God, through the Messias. Besides, this book is authorized by innumerable miracles done in the face of the sun, in different ages, and in the presence of the greatest enemies of the Christian religion. In short, this book has performed all that is foretold in it. It has changed the very face of the earth, peopled desarts with Anchorets, who have proved angels in mortal bodies. It has made the most arduous, and yet most lovely, virtues to flourish, in the midst of the most corrupt

Phen!

rupt and impious set of men, and has worked upon man, idolizing himself, to reckon himself henceforth nothing, and only to love an invisible Being. Such a book ought to be read, as if it descended from heaven upon earth. It is this book wherein God declares a truth, which is so probable of itself. The same God, all-good, and almighty, who alone could deprive us of eternal life, promises it to us. It is from the expectation of that everlasting life, that he taught so many martyrs to despise the short, frail, and miserable life of their bodies.

VIII.

Is it not natural to conceive, that God, who tries every man in this short life, as to virtue and vice, and often lets the wicked end their course in prosperity, whilst the virtuous live and die in pain and contempt; should delay, to another life, the reward of the latter, and the punishment of the first? This we are assured of in this divine book. O wonderful and comfortable conformity between the oracles of holy scripture, and the truth which we carry grafted within ourselves! Every thing agrees. Philosophy, the supreme authority

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of the promises, and the inward sentiment of truth in our own hearts. Whence comes it then, that men are so backward, and so incredulous about the happy news of their being immortal? The atheist tells them, they are without hopes, and that in a few days they are going to be swallowed up in the abyss of nothingness for ever. They rejoice at it. They triumph upon their approaching extinction. Those very people, who love themselves so passionately, are ravished at this doctrine so full of horror. They have a relish for despair. Others tell them, that they have in reserve an everlasting life to come; but they are angry with that expectation; they are soured at it; and dread to be convinced of it. They use all their subtilty to evade it's most decisive proofs. They chuse rather to perish in delivering themselves up to their mad pride, and brutal appetites, than to live eternally at the expence of the least constraint to embrace a virtuous course of life. O monstrous frenzy! O extravagant self-love! which turns against it's own interest: O man! become his own enemy, by loving himself immoderately.

CHAP. III.

Of the free-will of man.

THIS question will soon be decided, if we go about it with the same moderation and sedateness, as we examine all the most important queries, which are of use in human life;

I.

We do not enquire, whether God could not have created man, without giving him a free-will, and compelling him always to will what is good, as we suppose in the Christian religion, that the blessed in heaven are always necessitated to love God? Who is there can doubt but that God was absolutely master to create men at first in that state, and to fix them therein for ever.

II.

Now, it is not demonstrable from the nature of our souls, nor from the rules of

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supreme order, that God has not put all mankind in that state of a happy and holy necessity. We must agree, that nothing but the arbitrary will in God has resolved to make man a free agent; that is, exempt from all sort of compulsion or necessity, without determining to fix him in so happy a necessity as always to will what is good.

III.

WHAT decides the question, is the inward conviction of our free-will, which we constantly are conscious of. Our reason consists only in the clearness of our ideas. We cannot help consulting them attentively before we conclude that proposition is true or false. It doth not depend from our will to believe, that an affirmative is a negative; that a circle is a triangle; that a vale is a mountain, or that night is day. Whence comes it, that it is utterly impossible for us to confound those things? It is because the exercise of reason ends in consulting our ideas, and that the idea of a circle is intirely different from that of a triangle, that the notion of a vale shuts out that of a mountain, and that of the day is opposite to that of the night. Reason as much as you please, I defy you to form

any serious doubt about any of your clear ideas: you never judge of any of them, but it is by and from them you judge, and they are the unalterable rule of all your judgments. You mistake sometimes for no other reason, but that you do not consult them with a sufficient exactness: if you affirmed nothing but what they offer you, or denied nothing but what they clearly exclude, you would never fall into the least error. You would suspend your judgment as soon as the idea you examined should not appear sufficiently clear to you, and you would never surrender but to an invincible and irresistible light. Once more, the whole exercise of reason is confined to this consultation of ideas. Those who speculatively reject this rule do not understand themselves, and follow constantly in practice, through an unavoidable necessity, what in speculation they refuse to submit to. The fundamental principle of all reasoning being laid, I maintain, that our free-will is one of those truths of which every man, in his right senses, has so clear an idea, that its evidence is invincible. One may, with the outward lips, and in a passion, dispute and hold an argument against this truth in the schools, as the Pyrrhonists have ridiculously disputed

*What then is
become of
Frederick?*

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about the truth of their own existence, that they might have the reputation of doubting of every individual thing; they are a sect of liars and not of philosophers. They brag of their doubting, though to doubt be no ways in their power. Every man in his senses, who consults himself, and gives heed to himself, carries within himself an invincible decision, declaring him to be a free agent. This idea doth shew us, that a man incurs guilt in no other case, but when he doth what he might have chosen not to do; that is, what he doth by the choice of his will, without being determined thereunto, inevitably and invincibly, by some other cause, distinct from his own will. This is a truth, saith St. Austin, for the explaining of which, there is no occasion to search deeply for arguments in the writings of philosophers. It is what nature calls out; it is what is deeply imprinted in our hearts by bountiful nature; it is clearer than the very day; it is what all men know, from the schools, where children are taught to read, to the very throne of Solomon; it is what shepherds sing upon the hills, what bishops teach in the holy places, and what all mankind proclaim all over the world.

Doubts, concerning liberty, can be neither more sincere nor serious than those concern-

ing the existence of the bodies that surround us. In a disputation the imagination grows warm, one imposes on one's self, one fancies himself in a doubt, and thereby confounds, in vain sophisms, the most palpable truths : but in practice, men suppose liberty, as they take it for granted that they have arms, legs, a body, and that they are environed with other bodies, against which they ought not to run their own with any violence. Reason as much as you please upon your clear ideas, you must either follow them without fear of being deceived, or become an absolute sceptic. Universal doubting is not to be defended, although our clearest ideas should be proved to lead us now and then into errors. It is useless to deliberate whether we shall or shall not follow them. Their evidence is irresistible ; it carries our judgment forcibly along with it ; and if they mislead us, it is because we are under an invincible necessity of being misled. In that case we do not deceive ourselves, it is a power superior to ours that deceives us, and delivers us up to error and delusion. What can we do then but follow our reason ? And if even that deceives us, what is it will undeceive us ? Have we within ourselves another reason superior to that

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our very reason, by whose assistance we may mistrust her, and set her right again? That reason can be nothing else but our ideas, which we ask counsel of, and compare together. Can we, by the help of our ideas only, bring in question our very ideas? Are we possessed of a second reason to amend that first in us? No, for certain. We may indeed forbear inferring, when those ideas are dark, and when their darkness leaves us in suspense. But when they are as clear as this proposition, two and two make four, doubting could not be called an use of our reason, but a phrenzy. If it be deceitful to follow the dictates of a reason, which, by it's evidence, draws us invincibly, it is the infinitely perfect Being who deceives us, and is to be blamed for it. We do our duty when we thus suffer ourselves to be misled, and we should become guilty if we did resist that self-evidence, which, at last, would conquer us, maugre all our vain resistance; and maintain, with St. Austin, that the truth of the liberty of the will, and it's daily practice, is so inwardly and invincibly evident, that no man awake can doubt of it in his practice.

IV.

LET us proceed to some familiar instances that will make this truth plain to the senses. Show me a man who sets up for a profound philosopher, and denies free-will; I shall not give myself the trouble to argue with him, but I will try him in the most common occurrences of life to make him confound himself. I suppose that this man's wife is unfaithful to his bed; that his son disobeys and slights him; his friend betrays him; his servant robs him; if he makes any complaints of these, I will answer him, do not you know that none of all these are to blame, and that they were not free to act otherwise? They are, in your own opinion, as irresistibly necessitated to will what they do will, as a stone is forced to fall when it is no longer held up. Do you imagine that our philosopher will take this for a good excuse, and will be pacified by it? Can you believe that he will cease to blame the breach of faith of his wife, the insolence and ingratitude of his son, the treachery of his friend, and theft of his servant? Is it not certain, that this inconsistent philosopher, who dares deny the liberty of the will to his

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scholars from the desk, will suppose it as indubitable when at home, and that he will be no less reconciled to those people, than if, all his life long, he had publicly maintained the doctrine of the greatest liberty of the will? It is visible, therefore, that this is no true philosophy, since it gives itself the lye without any shame. Go on a little farther; tell this man that the world blames him for that action, of which the guilt is laid at his door. To justify himself, he will answer you, that he was not able to avoid it; and he will not question, but that he shall be cleared to all the world, if he but proves that he acted not by a free choice, but by unavoidable necessity and force. You see then that this pretended antagonist of free-will is reduced to suppose it in practice, even when he would be thought not to believe it.

V. It is true, that there are certain actions, which we are not free to do, and which we necessarily avoid. Then we have no manner of motive or reason to will, that can strike our understanding, put it in suspence, and cause us to enter into a serious debate to know, if it be expedient to do such an action, or let

it alone. It is thus, that a man, sound in body and mind, virtuous and guided by religion, is not free to throw himself headlong out of a window, to run naked about the street, and to murder innocent children. In this condition he can have no manner of reason to will commit those actions, no room to deliberate with himself about it, nor a real indifference of his will in that respect. Therefore he is not free to do those actions. There could be nothing but a melancholy madness, or a despair like to that of several heathens, which could bring a man to such violent measures; but as we feel within ourselves a true incapacity of committing such wild actions, whilst we have yet the use of our reason, we feel, on the contrary, that we are free about all those choices which we seriously deliberate upon. And indeed nothing could be more ridiculous, than to deliberate if we had it not in our power to chuse, and if we were always invincibly determined to one only side. Yet we often deliberate, and we cannot doubt, but that our deliberations are well-grounded as often as they refer to several ends, which have all their fair side and their motives to draw us into them. We ought, therefore, to believe, that the whole life of man is transacted as in the mere illusion of a dream, in

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deliberations which are but childrens play ; or we must conclude, that we are free in all the common occurrences in which all mankind thinks he deliberates, and even decides at his own pleasure. It is thus that I determined myself to rise, or to remain seated, to speak or be silent, to keep back my dinner or to take it without delay. It is in such things, that it is impossible for man to bring the exercise of his liberty seriously in question.

We must own besides, that man is not free either in respect to good taken in general, or in respect to the *summum bonum* clearly known. Liberty consists in a sort of equilibrium of the will between two different objects. Man cannot chuse but between objects worthy in themselves of some preference and of some love ; and which, betwixt them, make a sort of counterpoize. There is occasion on each side for some reasons true or probable to determine the will ; these are called motives. Good only, whether truly so or only apparent, can excite the will ; for evil in the shape of evil, without any mixture of good in it, is a nothing entirely despoiled of all desirableness. The exercise of liberty,

therefore, ought to be grounded on a sort of over-weight that is between the different good objects proposed. The understanding and the will must needs be in a balance between those good objects, whether true or apparent. Now, it is manifest, that if you put on the one side good, considered in a general view, that is, the whole of all good objects without exception; that you can put in the other scale but the nothing of all goodness; and that the will cannot possibly find itself in any suspense, or seriously debate what to chuse, all or nothing. Besides, if we suppose the *summum bonum* present and clearly known, it is impossible to oppose him any other good that can out-weigh it.

The infinite, without doubt, out-weighs the finite; the disproportion betwixt them is infinite. The understanding can neither doubt, hesitate, nor suspend it's decision one moment. The will is forcibly ravished and drawn into consent. Deliberation, in this case, would not be a deliberation but a delirium, and a delirium is impossible in a state wherein we suppose supreme truth and goodness most clearly present and known as such. It is impossible then to hesitate about the *summum bonum*, unless it be only known with a superficial, imperfect, and confused know-

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lege, which debases it so as to make it compared with goods infinitely below it. Then doth the darkness of that great object, and the distance in which it is beheld, make a sort of compensation to the smallness of the finite object which is present and apparent to our senses. In the case of this false equality man deliberates, chuses, and exercises his liberty between two goods infinitely unequal. But if the supreme good should show itself at once and evidently, with it's infinite and almighty charm, it would instantly ravish the whole affection of the will, and make all other good disappear, as broad day-light dissipates the shades of night. It is easy to see, that most of the goods, which offer themselves to us in the course of our lives, are either so mean in themselves, or so shaded, that they leave us in a condition to compare them together. It is by comparing, that we deliberate to make our choice; and when we do deliberate, we feel in our inward conscience that we are the masters of our choice, because the sight of none of those goods is powerful enough to destroy all counterpoise, and to draw off our will invincibly. It is in the counterpoise of the opposite good that liberty is exercised.

VII.

TAKE away this liberty, all human life is overturned, and there is not the least trace of order left in society. If men are not free in the good or evil they do, good is no longer good, evil is no longer evil. If an unavoidable and irresistible necessity forces us to will all what we will, our will is no more answerable for it's willing, than the springs of a machine are responsible for the motion which was unavoidably and irresistibly placed therein. In that case it is ridiculous to accuse the will, which will not, but as much as another cause, different and distinct from it, forces it to will. You must directly ascend to that cause, as, I accuse the hand which moves a stick to strike me, without blaming the stick itself, which strikes no farther or no more than the hand moves it. Again, if you take away liberty, you leave on earth neither virtue, vice, or merit. Rewards are ridiculous, and punishments unjust and hateful. Each man doth but what he ought, since he acts necessarily. He is not bound to avoid what is unavoidable; nor overcome difficulties that are insuperable. All things are according to order; for order consists in every thing giving way to fate or

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necessity. What can be more strange then,
 than to contradict one's own ideas; that is,
 the voice of reason; and to be obstinate in
 the defence of what one is forced to gainsay,
 every moment in practice; and then to esta-
 blish a doctrine which overthrows all order,
 all polity, which confounds vice with virtue,
 authorises all monstrous infamy, destroys all
 shame and remorse, degrades and defaces for
 ever all human-kind? Whence that desire
 to stifle thus the voice of reason? It is to
 shake off the yoke of religion; it is to pro-
 duce a flattering inability in behalf of vice,
 in opposition to virtue. Nothing but the
 most unruly pride and passions could urge
 man on to so violent an excess against his own
 reason. But that very extravagance ought to
 open that man's eyes who gave into it. Ought
 not man to be mistrustful of the corruptions of
 his heart, and decline to be his own judge, as
 soon as he perceives that the immoderate de-
 sire of evil doth carry him so far as to con-
 tradict himself, and to deny his own liberty,
 whose inward conviction doth, at each mo-
 ment, overcome him? So enormous and out-
 rageous a doctrine (as Cicero stiles that of the
 Epicureans) ought not to be debated in the
 schools, but punished by the civil magistrate.

VIII.

THEY ask, how the infinitely perfect Being, who always, according to his nature, tends to the greatest perfection in his work, can have created free agents, that is, left them to their own choice betwixt good and evil, order, and the overthrow of all order? Why should it be thought that he abandoned them to their own weakness, foreseeing that the use they would make of their liberty would end in their own ruin, and the disordering the whole work of God?

I answer, that what they pretend to deny, is unanswerably true. On the one hand, it is owned, that there is an infinitely perfect Being, who has created man; on the other hand, all nature calls to us that our will is free. Shew me the man who is not ashamed to deny it, I will force him to own it thirty or more times every day, in all the most serious occurrences of his life; truth will come from him in spite of his resolution, even when he shall be arguing against it. It is evident, therefore, that the infinitely perfect Being has created us free agents. The fact, as clear as the day, is decisive. Men may spin the thread of argument very fine, to prove that the in-

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finitely perfect Being had it not in his power to give that imperfection to his creature, and place therein that spring of all confusion. The answer is short and cutting. The infinitely perfect Being knows much better than we what becomes his infinite perfection. And it is evident, that man, who is his creature, is free, and it cannot be denied without contradicting one's own reason. Therefore the infinitely perfect Being has found, that the liberty of man was consistent with the infinite perfection of the Creator. It is requisite, therefore, that the finite rational Being should humble itself and be silent, when the infinitely perfect Being doth, in practice, make out the whole question; without doubt he has not destroyed order. It follows then that he has made man free, since man himself cannot stifle the cry of his conscience, proclaiming his liberty; and it follows thence also that God could make man a free agent without violating order. If narrow-sighted man cannot conceive, how that liberty, the spring of all disorder, can agree with that perfect harmony and supreme order in the work of God; he ought, with humility, to believe what he doth not understand; it is his very reason that keeps him constantly in chains by that irresistible im-

pression of his free-will: although he should not, with his reason, comprehend a truth, about which, however, his reason admits no doubt; he ought to look on that truth with the same eyes as he doth on many others in natural philosophy, which we can hitherto neither set in a true light, nor yet seriously call into question; as for example, the truth of matter which we can neither suppose to be compounded of atoms, nor divisible *ad infinitum*, without insuperable difficulties.

IX.

THERE is a wide difference betwixt the perfection of the workman and that of the work itself. The workman can do nothing but with an infinite perfection, for he can never degrade himself, or lose any thing of his own perfection; but the work of the infinitely perfect workman can never have but a limited perfection. If the work had an infinite perfection, it would become the very workman; for nothing, besides God himself, can be infinitely perfect. Nothing can be equal to him. Nothing can be more than infinitely below him; whence we ought to conclude, that notwithstanding his omnipotence, he cannot produce any thing out of him but

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what must be infinitely imperfect, that is, infinitely inferior to his own supreme perfection. To conceive what God is able to produce out of himself, we must behold him as seeing infinite degrees of perfection below his own, either by rising up to him, or by going downwards from him. So that he cannot fix any of his works where it shall not have an infinite progression below himself. All these different degrees are more or less exalted in respect to each other, but all of them are infinitely inferior to the supreme Being. So that men are evidently mistaken, when they are pleased to fancy, that the infinitely perfect Being cannot refuse to himself, for the preservation of his perfection and his order, giving to his creature the greatest order and the greatest perfection, which he is able to give it. On the contrary, it is certain, that God cannot fix any one of his creatures to that certain and determined degree of perfection, but what he might have put it in another superior degree of order and perfection, raising it still more towards the infinite perfection, which is himself. So that it is beyond dispute, that God, far from willing always the highest degree of order and perfection, can never proceed in raising his work to it, but stops always at a degree infe-

rior to such others as climb for ever towards the infinite. Why shall we wonder then, that God has not made the will of man so fully perfect as he might have made it? It is true, that he might, from the beginning, have made it incapable of sinning, blessed, and of the same stamp with that of the celestial spirits. But the objection, made before, would still remain in it's full force; since there are still above the celestial spirits, who are limited, infinite degrees of perfection ascending towards God, in which superior degrees the Creator might have created beings superior to the very angels. We must, therefore, agree to one of these things; either that God cannot produce any thing out of himself, because all he should thus create would be infinitely below himself, and consequently infinitely imperfect: or we must, *bona fide*, own, that God, in making of his creature, doth never chuse the highest degree of order and perfection. This one truth is sufficient to make the whole objection vanish. It is true, God had made man more perfect and more partaking of his supreme order (that is, more to his own image) in making him at first impeccable and blessed, than in making him a free agent: but it was not his pleasure, because his infinite perfection doth indispensibly

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oblige him to give always such a degree of perfection to his work, but that there be still left others above it *ad infinitum*. Every degree has an order and a perfection worthy of the Creator, though superior degrees have both greater. Man, as a free agent, is good in itself, consistent with order, and worthy of God, though man, incapable of sin, would certainly have been a more perfect creature.

X.

THOUGH God made man free, he did not abandon him to himself; he enlightened him with reason. He is himself within man to inspire him with virtue; to warn him at the least evil he is guilty of; to attract him with his promises; to withhold and refrain him with his threats; to soften and move him with the marks of his love. He pardons us, rebukes us, waits for us, bears with our repeated ingratitude and neglect, he is unwearied in his invitations to the last moments of our lives; and our whole life is a continued chain of his favours and grace. I confess, that if we conceive men without the liberty to do good, of whom God requires virtues impossible for them to perform, that it strikes a horror to think God has thus forsaken

them; it is contrary to his order and his goodness: but it is not contrary to order, that God should have left it to the choice of man, assisted with his grace, either to make himself happy by being virtuous, or unhappy by being a slave to vice; so that if he be deprived of the heavenly reward, it is because he has thrown it from him when it was in a manner in his own power. In that state man suffers no harm but what he doth to himself, having it fully in his choice to procure to himself the greatest happiness.

XI.

WHEN God made man, he imprinted in him a wondrous resemblance of that divinity of which he bears the image. It is a wonderful power in the dependent and created being, that his dependence doth not take away his liberty, but that he may qualify himself as he pleases. He makes himself either good or bad at his own choice, he turns his will towards good or evil, and he is, like God, master of his inward sentiments and operations; he has even, like God, a mixture of liberty, with respect to some goods, and of constraint and necessity to others. In the like manner as God is necessitated to love him-

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1 Chap.

self, and to love nothing but what is good, so man cannot love but what has some degree of goodness; and he loves God necessarily as soon as he has a full and evident knowledge of him. But, on the other hand, God, infinitely superior to every good thing different from himself, finds himself, by means of that infinite superiority, entirely free to chuse which he pleases among all those subaltern goods; which, though unequal to each other, yet have a sort of equality amongst them, in that they all are infinitely inferior to the highest good. So that none of them is perfect enough to determine God, and each of them leaves him to his own choice and determination. Man has something of the same liberty. None of all the goods which he knows here on earth overcomes his will, none determines him invincibly; all of them leave him to his own determination. He is his own, he deliberates, decides, and has a supreme empire over his own will. Certainly there is in that empire, over one's self, a surprizing character of likeness with the Godhead. That feature of likeness is worthy of the complacency of him who owes to himself to make all things for his own sake, and

that will is corrupt

Is

XII.

Is it not worthy of God, that, by making a right use of that liberty, he enables man to merit? What is greater for a creature than to merit? Merit is the purchase of one's own choice, and which makes man worthy of goods of a higher nature. By merit man raises, aggrandises, perfects himself, and engages God to bestow on him greater goods proportioned to his merit, called rewards. Is it not beautiful, and according to order, that God would not make man happy, but after he had given him room to deserve it? That succession of degrees by which man rises, is, without doubt, agreeable to the wisdom of God, and fit to establish his work: it is true, that man cannot merit, without being exposed to become guilty for not meriting. But it is not to draw man into guilt, that God allows liberty; he bestows it only to make him capable of meriting; and it is only for the sake of merit, which is his only end, that he bears with the guilt to which liberty makes man liable. It is against God's intention, and contrary to what he proposes by his aid, that man makes an ill use of so

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excellent a gift, which is so well adapted to make him more perfect.

XIII.

GOD, by giving liberty to man, designed to manifest his goodness, magnificence, and his love, in such a manner, however, that if man, contrary to his intention, should make an ill use of that liberty, by abandoning order in sinning, God would make him return into order in another manner by the punishment of his sin. So that all free agents are subject to that order, some by loving it, and persevering in that love; others by returning to it in repenting of their trespasses; others by suffering a just punishment for their final impenitence. So that order prevails over all men: it is inviolably preserved in the guiltless, repaired in converted sinners, and revenged with and by an eternal justice, which is itself supreme order, in the impenitent sinners. How glorious it is to that wisdom thus to draw good out of evil itself, and to turn evil into good! By permitting evil, God is not the author of it. What is his own in his creature, remains worthy of him; but he suffers that his work, which is always infinitely imperfect in itself, may lessen that degree of

goodness, which he hath placed therein. He suffers it to decay a little, to have the honour of repairing it by grace, or punishing it with justice; if he neglects or despises proffered mercies. O how glorious it is to God thus to glorify the two different parts of his order and goodness! The one is to reward virtue, the other to punish vice. If he had not made man free, he could not have manifested either his mercy or his justice; he could not have rewarded merit, punished guilt, nor converted the deviating sinner. He, in a manner, owed himself these different kinds of glory; he allows them to himself without lessening his goodness, of which every man partakes. Shall we wonder that he is obliged to glorify him so many different ways, if we give heed to the depth of God's counsel in what relates to the permission of sin? We cannot find any thing unjust towards man, since he doth not suffer him to go astray without giving him, at the same time, all the necessary helps to prevent it. If we look on that permission, with respect to God himself, it contains nothing that alters his order and his goodness, since he only permits what he neither doth himself nor incites man to do. To sin he opposes all the helps of reason and his grace;

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only he doth not employ his omnipotence to hinder man from falling into it, because he will not violate the free-will which he has left to man in favour of merit; and what order loses by his goodness and rewards, it regains it, at the same time, by his justice and punishment of sin. So that order, which has two essential parts, subsists entire by means of this alternative of mercy and justice, to either of which every one is to be surrendered.

What ought we, therefore, to conclude upon the three questions proposed?

The infinitely perfect Being has created us for his own sake, that is, that we may be busied with admiring, celebrating and loving him. That is his worship. The external signs of that worship are necessary to notify it to those who are unacquainted with it; to strengthen and perfect it in those who have already imperfectly embraced it, and to make it uniform in all, since all ought to be united in this public adoration.

The soul is immortal, since it has no cause of destruction in itself; since God doth not annihilate any being, no not the least atom, and since he expressly promises us an eternal life. The freedom of the will is indisputable. Those who deny it deserve no answer; they give themselves the lye. We

must either always suppose it, or give up our reason, and cease to live like men. What nature invincibly teaches us is, moreover, certified to us by God's authority speaking in the holy scriptures. What keeps us from believing? Whence comes it that man, so credulous in every thing that flatters his pride and passions, creates so many doubts and scruples about those truths which ought to fill him with joy and comfort? Man is afraid to find a God infinitely good, who is pleased with his love, and expects from him a way of living that makes him happy. He fears lest his soul should not die with his body, and God, after this miserable and short life, should prepare him a heavenly one without end. He fears to find a God who leaves him master of his destiny to make him happy upon being virtuous, or unhappy through his guilt, and who chuses the service of free-agents. Whence doth so unnatural a fear proceed, and an unbelief so contrary to our greatest interests? It is because self-love is a foolish love, an extravagant love, an out-of-the-way love, that betrays itself. He is much more afraid to stifle his passions and vanity a little, during the small time which is allotted him here on earth, than to lose the highest

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good, to renounce an eternal life, or to precipitate himself in an eternal despair. What can we expect from the reasonings of a mind thus distempered, and so fearful of admitting proper remedies for its cure? Should we be willing to hearken seriously to a man, who, in any other matters, should approve himself so full of prejudices against his real advantage? There is but one remedy for all these evils, which is, that man re-enter into the bottom of his heart and soul, not to possess himself, but to suffer himself to be possessed by God; he ought to pray to him, to listen to his voice, to mistrust himself, to trust in him, to condemn his pride; to ask for succours in his weakness, to restrain all his passions; and to acknowledge that self-love, being the wound and defect of his heart, he cannot meet with health and peace of mind but in the love of God.

LETTER III.

Concerning God and Religion.

S I R,

YOUR letter might very well require for answer a treatise composed by the most eminent hand. I shall, in obedience to your commands, set down here some thoughts, to which a man of your capacity will, with little trouble, add what may be wanting.

The reflections of a man, who, within himself, examines what he ought to believe concerning religion.

I FIND myself in this world without knowing either when I came, or how I came hither, or whither I am going. Some men talk to me of many things, and propose them to me as indubitable; but I am resolved to doubt of them, and even to reject them, un-

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less, upon examination, I find they deserve my belief. The true use of that reason I possess, is to believe nothing without knowing why I believe it, and without being determined to surrender myself to it's having certain and sure signs of truth. Some people would have me begin with a contempt of all those things that are called mysteries in religion; but I will be careful how I reject them before I have thoroughly examined them. There is as much levity and folly in being an unbeliever and stubborn, as there is in being credulous and superstitious. I will endeavour to find out a medium. I feel that my reason is very weak, and my will ^{too weak} very opposite to the snares of pride and passions, to find out that exact medium, and to keep always firm to it when found out. Yet I cannot, by mere natural strength, make myself either more penetrating or more patient in my enquiries, more exact in my reasonings, or more regular in my good dispositions; neither more armed against pride, nor more unbiassed in favour of truth, than I am already. I am left alone to make this enquiry, and it is of myself I am sincerely mistrustful, from vast numbers of unhappy experiments I have made from the rashness of judgments, and the corruption of my heart. What is left for

me to do in this weak condition! Oh! if it be true, that there is some Being above man, some Being more powerful and better than himself upon whom he depends; I conjure that Being, through his goodness, to assist me with his power; he sees my sincere desire, how I mistrust myself and have recourse to him. Oh! infinitely perfect Being, if it be true, that you exist and hear the desires of my heart, show yourself to me, take off the veil that covers your face; save me from the danger of not knowing you, of going astray far from you, or of losing myself in my vain thoughts, whilst I am seeking you! O supreme truth, wisdom, and goodness! If it be true, that you are all that is said of you, and that you have made me for your sake, suffer me not to be my own slave, but take into your possession the work of your own hands! Open my eyes, and show yourself to your creature.

CHAP. I.

Of my THOUGHTS.

I.

THAT which I call Self, is something that thinks, knows, or doth not know; that believes, is sure, and saith, "I see with certainty;" that doubts, mistakes, perceives it's error, and saith, "I was mistaken." That self is something that wills and wills not, that loves good and hates evil; that is sensible of pleasure and of pain; that hopes, fears, desires what it has not, and is pleased with what it possesses. That self is often irresolute, and little agreeing with itself; it changes, repents, and then repents again to have repented. That self knows itself, and doth govern itself: it has a sort of an empire over itself; for I cannot doubt but that I deliberate, in order to chuse between willing or not willing a thing, as having actually in my power the choice between these two opposites. When I will, it is because I am pleased to form such a will, and

that I chuse to will whilst I was master of not willing. That self, therefore, is what is called free, that is, master of it's own will.

II.

Has this self always had an existence? where was it? what was I an hundred years ago? Perhaps I then was a body; or, to speak more properly, many small bodies dispersed here and there in different shapes, which motion has gathered together to compose therewith that portion of matter over which I have a singular command, which commands me in it's turn, and which I call my body. Yet this body, an hundred years ago, did not exist thus, composed nor figurated as it is this day, with the same or the like wonderful organs; then it did not think: that thinking self had then no being. How came it to begin to think? Which way could it become of a not-thinking being, which it was until a certain day, yea, until a certain minute, that self that at once has begun to think, judge, and to will? Has it made it-self, has it conferred on itself thought, which it had not; and should it not have possessed it to be able to give it to itself, or else take it from the nothingness? Can the nothing-

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ness of thought give itself that degree of existence which it wants itself, and has not to give? Which way then is that thought, that will, and that liberty come to my share, which I had not before? and where must I look for the source thereof?

III.

SHALL I believe, that the same body is sometimes capable of knowing, judging, willing, being free; and sometimes of not having either knowlege, judgment, will, or liberty? Let us examine this point a little. I suppose a body reduced into the most subtle dust; if this dust was to be subtilized *ad infinitum*, I cannot conceive how the small bodies would be more capable of thought than the great ones. Suppose some corpuscula round, and some square, it appears to me that the round and the square ones are equally incapable of knowing each other, or of willing. The globules have no more reason than the triangles. The hooked atoms have neither more wit or understanding than the atoms without hooks. An hundred thousand atoms, when linked together, have no more thought, than each of them when single and separated from the rest. The liquid bodies

The Soul Immaterial.

have no more thought in their fluidity than the dry bodies in their consistence. The most rapid river has neither more will, nor a better understanding than a stone. The most impetuous motion doth no more give understanding to a heap of matter than rest doth. Take a piece of matter, reduce it into the most subtle powder, boil it up, make it evaporate again in the shape of volatile bodies, or else let the same undergo all the different kinds of fermentations known to the chymists; produce out of it the most rapid whirlwind, or cause it to move in any manner you think fit, you shall never conceive that this mass, thus fashioned, subtilized, and moved with rapidity, doth know itself, or can arrive at saying to itself, I believe, I doubt, I will or will not. Durst you say, that there is a degree of fermentation, and one distinct moment wherein this mass has neither understanding nor will; but that there is yet occasion for one last degree of fermentation, and that at the very subsequent moment this mass will begin, all on a sudden, to judge, to will, to say in itself, I believe and I will. How comes it that children, who are taught by nature only, and in whom reason is not yet altered by any prejudice, fall a-laughing, when they are told, that a watch, which they hear

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move, has much wit? It is because reason doth not permit to believe, that bare matter, whatsoever figure or motion you allow it, should ever think, judge, or will. How comes it, that so many people are shocked, when they are told, that the brutes are nothing but machines. Is it not, because these men cannot apprehend that a mere machine is capable of that knowlege which they suppose in brutes? So true it is, that reason has an aversion to believe matter capable of thought, though it be subtilized, figured, and moved to the utmost of our conceptions.

IV.

BUT let us suppose any thing: let us drive invention even to impossibility; let us grant, that the same body, which was a not-thinking one in the first minute, becomes, all on a sudden, a thinking, judging, willing one, and saying, in the very second minute, I will; our difficulty is not a bit removed: If thought be but a degree of being, which bodies can acquire and lose, we must at least own it to be the highest degree of existence that bodies can acquire, and that this perfection is much superior to that of being extended and figured. To know itself, and other beings, to

judge, will, be free; that is, without doubt, a degree of existence without comparison, preferable to that of being a mass, which knows neither itself nor others, and is incapable of judging, willing, or chusing. Therefore I ask again, who is it that has, at once, within one particular minute, given to a heap of matter that sublime degree of existence it had not in the very minute before? That heap could not bestow on itself this so excellent degree which it wanted, and of which we may say it had the nothingness or privation in itself; it could not receive it from other bodies; for other bodies, no more than this, cannot give what they have not. The whole corporeal nature jointly, supposing it intirely corporeal and not thinking, cannot give, either to itself in general, or to any of it's parts, that superior degree of existence, which is called thinking, and is not a dependent on the existence of bodies. Besides, no thinking being whatever can give or communicate thought, or the faculty of thinking, to any other being different from itself. Bodies may be to each other the occasion of motion, according to the rules established by a power superior to them all; but no limited being can give to another that degree of existence or perfection which it has not.

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The privation of one degree of existence is nothingness of that very degree. To give the degree of existence to one that has it not, there is occasion in a manner to work upon nothingness itself, and to cause a sort of real creation in it, in order to add to that inferior being already existing, a new degree of existence that raises it above itself. As to make that exist which had no manner of existence before, is, in effect, creating the whole being; so to make a certain degree of existence to exist in a peculiar body that had nothing of it, is, in effect, creating it in part. And it is evident, that the thinking beings, which we know, are too weak, and too imperfect, to have the power to create, in others, a very high degree of existence and perfection, which in them had no existence. The action of creation belongs to, and requires, an infinite power and perfection. There is an infinite distance betwixt the non-existence of a thing and it's existence. It requires, therefore, an infinite power to make that thing pass from non-existence to existence. Besides, one should have a perfection in it's highest degree, to be capable of becoming the source thereof, to supply others with it, and to communicate it to what is the mere nothingness and privation of it. To have in one's self that fecun-

dity, and to effect without the communication of that being, it is necessary to have the fulness thereof in one's self, through one's self, in property and in store. Now, to possess existence through one's self, is the highest perfection. I therefore seriously bethink myself, and acknowledge, that the thinking beings, which are like myself, are absolutely incapable of that fecundity, and of that creation of thought out of themselves, in subjects that have no manner of beginning for it. Thinking beings, that do mistake, are ignorant, delight in evil, hate virtue, often contradict each other, and are oftener contrary to themselves, cannot have that highest perfection of self-existence; they cannot be thinking to that degree as to be creators of thought in others.

V.

It follows then, that this self, which was not a thinking being an hundred years ago, is become thinking through the goodness of a superior Being, which, having thought of itself and fully, could make it come over in to me, who was the privation or nothingness thereof. It follows, that he possessed thought in himself in that fulness and perfection, that

he had power to bestow it on such as had it not. It follows, that he could make me step from the privation of thought to a thought existent. It follows, that he is a creator in me, at least, of that degree of existence of which I was the mere privation, when I was but a small parcel of matter. So that my conclusion is absolutely independent from the question that is debated, "Whether my soul be distinct from my body?" Without entering into that debate, I find all I want to arrive at my only end. If souls are distinct from the bodies, I ask, who is it that has united my body and my soul? who has joined two such different natures? They have not formed a partnership by any compact freely agreed upon among themselves. The body is not capable thereof. The soul doth not remember to have made any such bargain; it would certainly have retained some remembrance of it, if it had done it out of its free choice. Besides, if the soul had done it freely, it might at pleasure break the agreement; whereas we see it cannot put an end to it without destroying the organs of the body. On the other hand, the other being like unto me, far from having established in me that union or mutual society, are in the same case, and, as well as myself, look for a superior

cause of it. Lastly, whence proceeds a difference which I experience between that parcel of matter, which I call my body, and all other neighbouring bodies? Though I am never so willing that other bodies should move, they stand still for all my wishes; my will, when alone, has not even the power of stirring the least atom; but as to the heap of my own body, as soon as my will commands, that heap immediately obeys. I will, and instantly all my limbs turn which way I please. Who has given me that absolute power over them, whilst I am so impotent in respect to all other bodies which surround me? If, on the contrary, my soul is nothing else but my body become thinking, I ask, who it is, that has created, in my body, that degree of existence, I mean thought, which was not there before?

C H A P. II.

Of my own BODY, and of all other bodies in the universe.

I.

THERE is a portion of matter which I call my body, because it's motions depend entirely from my will, whereas no other body depends upon it. That portion of matter seems to me framed on purpose to perform all the functions in which it is employed. I see a body made with artful symmetry; it is placed on two thighs and two legs, of equal size and well proportioned. Have I a mind to remain standing and unmoved, my thighs and legs are straight and firm like pillars which sustain the whole edifice. On the contrary, have I a mind to walk, those two great Colossuses are ready divided by articulations and joints; whilst the one remains steady to sustain me, the other advances to carry me towards the objects to which I have a mind to be nearer; but that body, at the same time it inclines, knows how to fasten it-

self, so that it preserves a perfect equilibrium to prevent it's falling. The body, proportioned to these two supporters, is strengthened by ribs well disposed in semicircles which join together before; they all come from the backbone, which is made up of vertibres, which are small but very hard bones, inserted into each other, so that the back is at the same time very straight and very firm when I think fit, and very flexible to bow itself downwards or sideways as soon as I find occasion. The office of the ribs is to shut in and preserve in safety the principal organs, which are, in a manner, the center of life, and are extremely tender; yet they leave betwixt each of them an openness, exactly at the place I want it, to facilitate the expansion or contraction of all those inward parts, either for breathing or other vital operations. My heart is like the spring, whence flows, with impetuosity, the blood, which goeth through innumerable conduits to moisten and nourish the muscles of all the members, just as rivers do water the fields to make them fruitful. That blood, which grows slower in it's course, returns from all the extremities of the body to the center, to re-kindle it's flame and resume new spirits. The lungs are like bellows promoting inspiration. The stomach is a store-

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room which receives all aliments ; it contains juices proper for their dissolution, and for their conversion into a sort of milk, which soon after becomes blood. The lung-pipe, when well formed, is the most perfect of all musical instruments. All is marvellous in the body of man, even the instruments of those meanest and lowest functions which decency forbids to name. There is in this whole body never an inward spring but what surpasses all the industry of the mechanists. On the upper part of this body hang down two arms, divided in several joints, so that they move all manner of ways ; at the end of them are two hands, which are lengthened and folded by means of the joints of the fingers armed with nails. What could possibly be found out fitter than they to lay hold, to repulse, to carry, to draw, to separate bodies linked together, to unravel things that are entangled, to compose either the coarsest or the finest works of all sorts of materials ?

Still higher, the neck is raised, which holds itself upright or bends down, turns to the right or the left according to occasion, and carries the head, the principal seat of all sensation. The back-part of the head is covered with hair, which either adorn or strengthen it. The fore-part is the face, where two e-

qual eyes, and uniformly placed, seem to be blazing with a celestial flame. The nose is not only the organ of smelling, but likewise adorns the face by it's protuberance. The two ears are seated on each side to facilitate hearing from the right or the left. Those organs of feeling are double, not only to make their operation readier and easier on both sides, but to be at hand in case some accident should happen to either. The mouth, on account of the lips, is a great ornament to the face: when it opens it shows a double row of teeth designed to break the aliments, and to prepare them for easier digestion. The voluble and moist tongue strikes the palate and teeth in so many different ways, that it articulates a sufficient number of sounds thereof to compose all the languages of the universe. But I dare not undertake to describe all that is wonderful in the structure of my body, I only hint at the general heads; it would be endless; the more we search, and the more we discover, we find every part of it far surpassing all the art of the most skilful men. The body of man is the most compound, and the most industrious piece of machinery.

II.

IF, from my own body, I proceed to other bodies that surround me, I do not only perceive a great many bodies like my own, but, besides, I see every-where animals made after different patterns. Some walk on four feet, others have wings to fly in the air, and others have fins to swim in the waters. The ships which men build with so much art, according to such exact and difficult rules, are only copies made after them; birds and fishes, which sway in the two liquid elements, whereof the one is somewhat thicker than the other. Of these animals, some are subservient to us in carrying of burdens, as the camels; others supply with their strength what we are not able to perform with our own, as the oxen; which afterwards serve us for food: the sheep first nourish us with their milk, and then clothe us with their wool. Man has acquired the art of ruling all these, either with his strength or industry, and makes them all subservient to his occasions. A worm, an ant, a gnat, shew an hundred times more industry than the most complete watch of the best artificer. The earth, that sustains us, draws
out

out of it's fruitful bosom all we want for our food, every thing issues out of it, and re-enters into it, to be born again every year; it never is wore quite away. The more you tear up it's bowels, the more it fills you with it's beauties to reward your labour. It is covered with plentiful crops, adorned with greens, and together with man feeds the beasts that are subservient to man, and afterwards food for him. The trees which it produces are great garlands planted in it's bosom for it's ornament, in the same manner as hair adorns the heads of men. These trees, in the summer, refresh us with their shade, and their wood warms us in the winter. Their fruit, suspended from their boughs, falls into our hands as soon as ripe. The plants have an infinite variety, all of them have an order that renders them uniform to a certain degree, but beyond that, each of them is different, and there are not two leaves upon a tree in all points alike. The blossoms, which beautify all nature, are the promising pledges of fruits, and the fruits, which crown the year, spread plenty just before that season, whose rigour hinders men from labour. The rivulets fall down from the mountains. The rivers, after having watered different coun-

tries, and made trade easy to their inhabitants, fall into the sea, which, far from depriving men of each others society, is, on the contrary, the center of commerce between the most distant nations. The winds, which purify the air, and temperate the seasons, are the soul of navigation and of trade between the several nations. If the air was but a little thicker we could not breathe therein, it would be to us like a sea wherein we could not avoid being drowned. Who is it that has been able to give it so adequate a degree of thinness and fineness?

The sun rises and sets to give us the day and the night. Whilst it leaves us in the quiet of darkness, it is gone to enlighten another part of the globe opposite to ours. The earth is a globe suspended in the air, and this great luminary turns round about it, because it owes it it's rays, and is not only regular in it's rounds, which form night and day, but also in it's gradations to and from the poles, which is the efficient cause of summer and winter by turns, for each half of the hemisphere. If the sun came but a little nearer to us we should be scorched; if it receded but a little farther from us, we should be frozen, and our vital heat would be extinguished. Who is it that conducts and guides with so

much evenness that flambeau of the universe, that subtle and rapid flame?

The moon, nearer to our earth, borrows from the sun a soft light that tempers the darkness of the night, and lights us when we cannot enjoy the light of the day, or wait for it's return. Observe how many conveniences there are to render the life of man easier!

But what do I see! a prodigious number of glittering and shining constellations in the firmament like so many suns! At what a distance are they from us! How prodigious and immense is their size that confounds our imagination, and startles our very soul! What do we seem to ourselves! Despicable atoms, seated, we know not in what corner of the universe, when we behold these innumerable suns. An almighty hand has sown them profusely, to make us astonished at a magnificence which costs him nothing.

III.

If I go into a house, I there find foundations laid of very hard stone to make the superstructure durable; I see walls raised high, with a top-covering which hinders the rain from falling into it: I observe in the middle

an empty place, which is called a yard, and which is the center of the whole; I meet with a stair-case, whose steps are visibly made to ascend by; apartments separated from each other for the convenience of those that inhabit this house; rooms with doors to enter by; locks and keys to open and shut them; windows to let the light in, without admitting the wind at the same time; a chimney to make fires in, without being disturbed by the smoke; a bed to rest in, chairs to sit down on, a table to eat, and a desk to write upon.

At the sight of all these conveniencies, managed with so much art, I cannot doubt but that it is the handy-work of men. I can never think they are atoms which chance has thus ranged together. It is no ways possible for me seriously to believe, that the stones of this building have raised themselves upon each other with so much order, as the poets represent us the walls of antient Thebes, raised by the harmonious lyre of Amphion.

Never will any man in his senses affirm, that this house, with all it's furniture, made and furnished itself. The order, proportion, symmetry, the manifest design of the whole, forbid us to ascribe this to a blind cause, such as is chance. It will be in vain for any man to tell me, that this house made itself by mere

chance, and that men, who found all those things thus disposed by mere chance, make use of them, and only fancy that they were made for their use and on their account. Such thoughts cannot enter into the minds of rational men. It is just so with Homer's Iliad; or a watch found in a desert island; no-body could ever imagine that admirable poem, or that artful watch were the effect of mere chance; it would immediately be concluded, that it was some sublime poet who had composed those fine lines, and that a skilful master had made that watch. Those are sufficient premisses to form our conclusion upon. The work of the whole universe has an hundred times more art, order, wisdom, symmetry, and proportion, than all the most artful productions of the most skilful men. It is therefore a blind obstinacy to refuse acknowledging the almighty hand which has formed the universe.

A design implies a designer - See Paley's Watch - & Cic. de Nat.

C H A P. III.

*Of the power which has formed my body,
and made me a thinking being.*

I ACKNOWLEDGE, therefore, that undoubtedly it was an all-wise and almighty power which ordered the universe, and shaped that peculiar body which I call my own. I own that the same supreme power did, without doubt, add within me, to that body a thinking being distinct from that body; or that he has given to that body the faculty of thinking, which it had not, and that from not thinking, as it was naturally, he has made it thinking, in the manner I now see it. If that power has linked together those two natures, which we call body and soul, and are so unlike, it follows, that this power must be superior to both those natures; he ought to have an equal and supreme authority over both; he must contain within himself the whole perfection of each of them; he ought to be capable to subject them by his mere will to that mutual harmony betwixt the motions of the body and the thoughts of the soul; that supreme Being ought to be so much master

of bodies, as to be able to give to a spirit such a power over any other body as we commonly ascribe to God. My will, which of itself has no power over any other body, so as to force it to act, needs only to will; and that body, which I call my own, immediately obeys its command: you would think that it knows and hears the order of my will, it pays obedience to it much in the same manner as we say all beings do obey the voice of God. What supreme power is this that is given to my mind over my body! How powerful and perfect must he be, who gives to a being so limited and impotent, so much power over another being so widely different from itself? He certainly carries in himself the universality of beings; that is, the universal perfection of all kinds; he most eminently unites in himself the whole real perfection of spirits and bodies, and has the supreme empire over those different natures, even to a capacity of communicating this power to one of these natures over the other, in order to form that union which composes man.

If, on the contrary, that power has not placed in me a double nature, but has only been the cause, that my body, which did not think, has, at a certain point of time, begun to think, it follows, that this power has created

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in me that new degree of existence; it must be that this power, by it's infinite fecundity, has made that being, which I call myself, pass from the privation, or nothingness of thought, to the existence of thought, which is now my own.

Which is then that voice that calls out of nothing a very exalted degree of existence, which was not in me before, and makes it exist in me? that creation of thought in an inanimate, blind, and insensible mass, is, without doubt, a work of the Almighty. See there a Creator: if he is not such as to my first degree of existence, which is to be a heap of matter, he is at least the Creator of the second degree of existence, in me, which is far superior, *viz.* that of a thinking being. But how can we conceive him to be the Creator of the superior degree of existence if he was not such of the inferior? How could a vile and inanimate mass receive from him so high a degree of perfection, if it was not dependent on him? Besides, how is it probable, that the most perfect degree of existence, *viz.* that of thinking, judging, and willing freely, should be dependent on him; so that he can create and give it when he pleases, to the meanest beings that are deprived of it; and yet that the lowest degree

of existence, viz, being a mean and inanimate mass of matter, should exist of itself and be independent of that power? If it was so, we could not avoid saying, that the lowest degree of existence possesses the highest perfection; which is, to exist of itself, to be independent; in a word, to be uncreated; and that the highest degree of existence has the greatest imperfection; to wit, that of being dependent, not to exist of itself; to have but a borrowed existence; in a word, to be only a created being.

It is apparent, therefore, that the power which re-unites in itself all those different degrees of existence, and creates them in me by his own good pleasure, cannot be otherwise than infinitely perfect. It must necessarily exist of itself, since it causes every thing to exist that is distinct from itself. We must own that carries in itself the fulness of being, since it possesses it to such a degree as to communicate it to nothingness. It must have the universality of existence, since it has an equal empire over all natures, and all the different degrees of perfection: in short, it must be equally wise and powerful, since it frames, beautifies, and conducts the universe with such an art and order, as is visible even from

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the least insects to the very stars, and man himself, who, having the faculty of thinking, is a more excellent being than all the rest together.

CHAP. IV.

Of the worship due to that power.

I.

IT follows then, that this first Being, which I acknowledge as the fertile spring of all others, has drawn and made me out of nothing. I was nothing, and it is through him alone I have begun to be all what I am. It is in him that I have being, motion, and life. He has taken me out of nothing to make me whatever I am; he still upholds me every moment with his hand, and suspended in the air over the abyſs of nothingneſs, wherein my own weight would make me re-lapſe, if he left me to myſelf; and he continues exiſtence to me, which was not natural to me, and to which he inceſſantly raiſes me, notwithstanding my frailty, through a bounty which has occaſion to be repeated every

moment of my duration. I am then but a borrowed being, but half a being, but a being that is continually betwixt existence and nothingness, but a shadow of the immutable Being. That Being is all and I am nothing, at least I am but a weak thing derived from his plenitude without bounds. I have not only received at his hand certain gifts: that which has received the first of his gifts is nothingness; for there was nothing in me, pre-existent to all his gifts, and capable of receiving them. The first of his gifts, that has been the foundation of all the rest, is what I call myself. He has given me that self; I owe him not only all what I have, but besides, all what I am. O incomprehensible gift! which is soon named in our insignificant language, but what the understanding of man will never rightly apprehend the depths of! That God, who has made me, has given me myself to myself; that self, I love so much, is no less than a present from his bounty: that God ought, therefore, to be within me, and I in him, if I may speak thus, since it is of him I received this self. Without him I had not been this self; without him I should not have that self to be an object of my love, nor the love with which I love that self, nor the will that loves it, nor the thought by which I

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know myself. The whole is a gift; he who receives the gift, is himself the first gift received. "O God! thou art my true Father:

*Prayer to
the Creator*

"it is thou who hast given me my body, my
"foul, my extension, and my thought: it was
"thou that biddest me be, and instantly I be-
"gan to be, when I was not before. It is
"thou that hast loved me, not because I
"existed already, and did already deserve
"thy love, but on the contrary, that I might
"begin to exist, and that thy previous love
"might make something lovely of me: it is
"my nothingness, therefore, that thou didst
"love from all eternity, to give it a being,
"and make it worthy of thee."

II.

"O God! I owe thee all, since I received
"all from thee, and owe thee even this self,
"which has received so much from thy
"bounteous hands! I owe thee all, o infi-
"nite goodness! But what shall I return
"thee? Thou hast no occasion for any
"thing. I have, since all came from thee.
"Far from hoarding up for thyself, thou hast
"heaped thy blessings on me. Even when
"they are in my hands, they are rather thine
"than mine, since I have myself no existence

“ but in thee. I have them only upon trust,
“ but thou possessest them as thy own. Thou
“ canst not intirely divest thyself of them, so
“ essential it is that all good should remain in
“ thee. What then shall I give thee? There
“ remains nothing in my power to offer thee
“ but myself; but what I call myself is no less
“ thine than all the rest. Once more, what shall
“ I pretend to give thee, who have received
“ all at thy hands? O eternal love! Thou
“ requirest but one thing of me, which is
“ the free-will of my heart. Thou hast left it
“ free to me, that I might like and chuse freely
“ that immutable subordination which ought
“ for ever to retain my heart in thy power;
“ thou only willest that I should agree to that
“ order, which constitutes the happiness of
“ all the creation: but that I may do so,
“ thou shewest me outwardly all the charms
“ thereof, to make it appear lovely to me;
“ and besides, thou interest with the strong
“ allurements of thy grace within my heart,
“ to move it's springs, and to make me love
“ what so well deserves it. So that thou art
“ at the same time the object and the author
“ of my love, at the same time the loving,
“ and the well-beloved. Thou lovest thy-
“ self in me, and how is it possible that thy
“ vile and corrupt creature could worthily

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“ love thee, if thou didst not take care to
“ love thyself in him ?

“ The incense of men, is, with respect to
“ thee, but a despicable smoke, thou needest
“ not either the fat or the blood of their sa-
“ crifices ; their ceremonies are but a vain
“ spectacle, their richest offerings are too
“ poor for thee, and more thy own than
“ theirs : their very praises are but a lying
“ speech, unless they adore thee in spirit and
“ in truth. No service can be acceptable to
“ thee but what is love. External signs are
“ good when proceeding from the heart ; but
“ the essential worship of thee is nothing but
“ love, and thy kingdom is entirely within
“ thyself ; it would be a gross mistake to
“ search for it out of thee. O love ! to love
“ thee is all in all ; the whole of man ; all
“ besides it is not he, it is only his shadow.
“ Whoever doth not love thee is a stranger
“ to his own nature, he has not yet begun
“ to live.”

III.

But ought this worship of love to be thus
lodged and confined in my heart, as never to
let me give any outward signs of it ? No !
If I truly love, it will be impossible to conceal

my love. Love wants to be active, and influence others to love. Can I suffer other men, whom God has made for his own sake, as well as myself, to be ignorant of their condition !

God is so great a Being, that he owes all to himself. The insolent folly of man, that despicable creature, is to think of nothing but what he calls himself: it is this idol of his heart, which is the object of God's resentment and jealousy. Nothing is more unjust than only to consider myself for no other reason but that it is myself. This is no valuable reason, it is no more than an impetuous torrent of self-love; on the contrary, God's supreme justice ought to consist in not loving any thing but in proportion to that degree of goodness which renders it lovely. He meets in himself innate goodness, and perfection, consequently he owes himself wholly to himself in the most strict justice. On the other hand, he finds in all of us but a limited and mixed goodness, impaired by that mixture. The goodness he finds in us is no more than what himself placed there, and he can delight in nothing but his most gracious bounty: he finds in us nought besides nothingness, evil, and his own gifts; he can, therefore, in strict justice, be no ways be-

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holden to us. He can love in us but his own goodness, which surpasses our nothingness and malice: he cannot, therefore, remit any thing of his rights, he would violate his own order, and cease to be what he is, if he did not do himself that strict justice. He could not, therefore, create men with an understanding and a will, but with a design that that their whole lives should be employed in celebrating his supreme truth, and loving his infinite goodness. Such is the principal end of our creation.

IV.

HE has placed men together in a society, wherein they are bound to love and mutually help each other, like children of the same family, who acknowledge one common father. Every nation is but a branch of that numerous family, which is scattered over the face of the whole earth. The love of that common father ought to be apparent, manifest, and inviolably reigning in this whole society of well-beloved children. Each of them never ought to fail saying, to those that are born from him, "know the Lord, who is your "Father." Those children of God ought to proclaim his kindness, sing his praises, no-

tify it to such as are ignorant of it, and remind those of it who forget it. They were placed on earth for no other end than to know his perfection, accomplish his will, and to communicate to each other that knowledge and celestial love. What would it signify, if that family kept up society, and agreed in every thing else but in the worship of so good a parent? It is requisite, therefore, there should be a society amongst them for the worshipping of God; and it is this which is called religion; the meaning of which is, that all men ought to instruct, edify, and love each other, in order to love and worship their common father. “The ground
 “and essential part of religion doth not con-
 “sist in any outward ceremony, but entirely
 “in the understanding of truth, and the love
 “of the sovereign good;” but those inward sentiments cannot be sincere, without being in a manner put in a co-partnership amongst men by some determined and apparent signs. It is not sufficient to know God, we must make it appear that we know him, and so conduct ourselves that none of our brethren may either remain ignorant of him, or forget him. Those apparent signs of worship are commonly called religious ceremonies. Those ceremonies are no more than tokens,

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by which men have agreed to edify each other, and to awake in each other the remembrance of that worship which is in their hearts. Besides, weak and feeble men have often occasion for those visible tokens, to put themselves in mind of the presence of that invisible God, whom they are bound to love. Those tokens have been instituted with a certain degree of majesty, the better to represent the grandeur of that heavenly Father. Most men, incapable of fixing the volatility of their imagination, and hurried away by their passions, have great occasion, that the pomp of those signs, instituted for the common worship of God, should strike and fetter their imagination, that thereby all their passions may become calmer, and be suspended for a while. It is properly this, that is called religion, sacred rites, and the public worship of that God who has created us. Human kind cannot acknowledge and love his Creator, without shewing he loves him, without desiring to make him beloved, without expressing that love, with that magnificence proportioned to the Being he loves; or lastly, without inciting himself to love, by the very tokens of his love. This is that religion which is inseparable from the belief of the Creator.

CHAP. V.

*Of the religion of the Jews, and of
the Messias.*

SINCE the first Being, who has created me, has made all things for his own sake, and requires, of intelligent creatures, a worship of love, publicly celebrated in their societies, I am bound to find out somewhere in the world that public worship to join myself thereunto, and to celebrate it together with those other men who exercise it in community. But where shall I meet with this so necessary worship? God, who refers all things to himself, without doubt, never leaves himself without that worship, which is the sole end of his work. As he has always produced his creature, for the sake of the glory which he pleases to draw from that worship; there can never have been a time wherein he had not formed some kind of worshippers worthy of him. I therefore look round, examining all ages and all nations, to discover where that pure worship, worthy of the Creator, is to be found.

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I see a prodigious number of nations that have worshipped stones, wood, metal, and have believed that some God-like beings were present and affixed to those particular figures of men or beasts, shaped in those different manners; but certainly the Godhead cannot be confined to, nor contained within, those inanimate figures. Besides, those they have worshipped, as Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, Mercury, and Bacchus, far from being real gods, were only very vicious, mean, and criminal creatures. Men who worship the true God, Creator of the universe, and regulate their morals according to that worship, deserve, undoubtedly, a much greater esteem than such gods, guilty of the grossest vices. Even a heathen has owned that the gods of Homer were very much inferior to his heroes. How strangely degrading of the divinity this is! How impious and indecent was that worship of so many false and unworthy deities, who seem to have been invented by some seducing mind, to turn divinity into ridicule, and to blot out the memory of the true God!

And although some ingenious men should strain matters so as to reduce paganism to the worship of one only God, infinitely perfect, adored by different names, and under many different and mysterious figures; when, at

the same time, the heathens did not believe polytheism: yet can we not avoid confessing that this visible multitude of gods was very indecent and scandalous, that borrowed system of divinity, and spring of impious errors; and it was necessary to forsake that variety of names and mysterious representations of them, to reduce the whole divine worship to the acknowledging of one only God, so perfect as not to have any thing his equal, to be infinitely superior to all things, and having produced every individual thing from the abyss of nothingness, into which he could at pleasure re-plunge it every moment. Besides, the pagan religion offered to God no other vows and prayers but such as proceeded from a thirst after the good things of the earth; they prayed only for health and wealth, for such pleasures and worldly happiness as flattered their pride. Such a religion was a disgrace to divinity, and an authority for all the vices and corruptions of men. But I want, on the contrary, a worship worthy of the first Being, and that mends my morals. Once more; where shall I find that, which certainly cannot but be in some corner of the earth, since it is only for it's sake that the earth was made, and that men have been created for no other end, than to celebrate it?

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I perceive, in a corner of the earth, a very peculiar people. All others run after idols, all others blindly adore a monstrous multitude of vicious and despicable deities; but that people, whom we call Jews, worship but one single God, Creator of heaven and earth: a Jew by the law, to which his whole worship is referable, is obliged to love God with all his heart, all his soul, all his thought, and with all his might. That circumcised people have in their law a circumcision of the heart enjoined them, of which the circumcision of the body is but a figure; and that circumcision of the heart is the separation of all affection, which doth not proceed from the principle of the love of God. If I could find upon earth any other race of men, whose worship was likewise to love God, and who made virtue consist in preferring God to themselves; I would compare that religion with this of the Jews, to examine which was the purest and most worthy of being followed: but on the other hand, I find, that this God, who owes all things to himself, could not create man for any other end, but to pay him a public worship of love and obedience; on the other hand, I meet with this worship among no other nation besides the Jews: the pagans have feared their false gods, they

were desirous of appeasing them, they offered them the fat and blood of beasts, incense in their temples, and other coarse gifts; but they never gave them their hearts, they never so much as thought of loving them, and much less to value them above their own-selves, or to love their own-selves only for the sake of their gods. And indeed, they did not take any of them to have been their Creator; Jupiter himself, though supposed much superior in power to all other deities, was not esteemed to have drawn beings out of nothing; only, according to them, he had found a matter more antient than himself, that had existed from all eternity, and which he had shaped by bringing the chaos into order.

As to the philosophers, they valued reason, justice, virtue, and truth only, for the sake of their intrinsic worth. They believed, that the gods gave health, wealth, and glory, but they pretended to owe virtue and wisdom, which distinguished them from the rest of men, to none but themselves, of which they had the source in themselves. They never did unravel either the bounty of the creation, the power of the Creator, or the love we owe him, of valuing him above ourselves. So that in looking over all the nations of the

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earth in past times, I can find none but the Jews, that adored the true God, and were acquainted with the worship of loving him. But that love was rather figurative than practical with them: it is rather promised there for times to follow, than actually reigning in their hearts. I perceive, in the midst of that nation, a certain number of righteous filled with that worship of love; but the greatest part only busied with ceremonies, the sacrificing of beasts, and an external worship, to obtain of God peace, health, liberty, the dew from heaven, and the fat of the earth. All expect a Messiah promised to them, and figuratively expressed in their mysteries: but some, inconsiderable as to their numbers, expect him as one who will purify their morals; renew the heart of man; heal the wounds which sin has made; spread the knowledge and the love of God, and give the face of the earth a new aspect; the rest, who make up the multitude, expecting nothing but an earthly, conquering, a prosperous and invincible Messiah, who will flatter their pride, reign over all the nations, and heap on the Jews all temporal blessings.

Both agree that their religion is yet but a type of what it is to be under the reign of
 that

that Messiah; all agree that, according to those scriptures which they say are inspired by God, that Messiah is to bring all the idolaters and Gentiles to the worship of the true God. Without embracing all the subtilties of their rabbins, in the explaining this passage of the scriptures, it is evident, both by this same text, and the meaning of it, which they all agree in, that the Messiah is to establish everywhere the true worship of love, and utterly abolish idolatry.

I am loath to enter into all the mysterious subtilties of those Jewish doctors; it is sufficient for me to see, in gross, two things, in my opinion, palpable: the one is, that all the periods of time, which the Jews have, from time to time, fixed as the true season for the coming of the Messiah, are all and every one of them passed; that now they will not consent, that a fixed term should be assigned; that they no longer know what to adhere to, as if they had lost their way; that after so long a wandering over the earth, all their tribes are confounded and mixed; that they have not so much as any tokens left by which to know their Messiah, in case he should now come; that for more than sixteen hundred years past they have carried all the marks of

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the curse foretold them in their own books, and which will remain upon them to the last, for having not known him, sent by God.

The other thing I observe, is, that Jesus Christ doth bear the signs of the true Messiah: he has drawn the Gentiles to him according to the promises. Of so many different, barbarous, and idolatrous nations, he has made one single people, who has destroyed the idols, adores the true God Creator, renders him the true worship of love, and is united in that worship from one end of the world to the other. All Europe is filled with Christians. There are but few kingdoms in Asia, even beyond the East-Indies, where you may not find some: they have penetrated far beyond all the countries, which made up the world known to the antient Jews, Greeks, and Romans: some there are in all those countries of Africa whose ports are free: all the vast continent of America, called the New World, is governed by them. So that, from the rising to the setting sun, in the two hemispheres, ^{preached as having been} Jesus is offered to God as a pure and spotless victim, designed to expiate the sins of the world. All unite themselves to him to make up with him but one victim of love; and all, who sin, beat their breasts to

obtain through him that mercy which they stand in need of.

Let us set aside all disputes about the detail, since the whole is sufficient to decide of all. What is evident without any debate is, that there is on earth none besides the Jews and the Christians, who show me that worship of love, which I seek every-where to embrace: I am obliged to fix myself for the practice of it with one of these two. And between them two I cannot seriously go about to make a parallel. Though the one and the other partake of imperfections inseparable from human nature; yet has the Christian such lineaments of perfection as are infinitely above all that the Jews can boast of. The Jews themselves forewarn me by their law, their ceremonies, promises, all the circumstances of their condition, that they possess the true religion but figuratively; that they are themselves only like those plaister moulds made to cast a marble or brazen statue in. I find, in the Christian people, composed out of all the nations of the known world, the people who was to, and doth, inherit the promises, inoculated on the stem of Abraham's race; it is the adopted people, that composes but one body, and but one

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uninterrupted succession since the patriarchs to our own times: this way I find what I wanted, that is, that worship of love, which ought to be as antient as the world, and for whose sake the world itself has been made: I can see it distinctly noted in all ages; it received birth in the garden of Eden; was not extinguished by the sin of Adam; part of his posterity preserved it; it was renewed after the deluge; Abraham removed it into a particular region; Moses made it more illustrious with his ceremonies; the saints of the old covenant practised it, and foretel it's perfection; whose accomplishment is reserved for the Messiah! Jesus comes to make us familiar with God, and to teach us the self-denying and unmercenary true worship; he comes to teach us, not to live in the midst of dainty pleasures and worldly honour, not to butcher beasts and burn incense to God, to draw thereby terrestrial blessings on ourselves, as the Jews fancied; but to deny ourselves, to love ourselves only in him, for him, and with his love. Maugre the infirmities of human nature, a great number is seen, whom that pure religion possesses and animates: that love of the true God creates in them all the virtues opposite to self-love.

This is undoubtedly the worship I was

looking for. It was with the Jews but figuratively: nothing of it was to be found there but it's seed, a small bud and a shadow of it: the perfection of it is no where but in that new people which is united to that old one: it is with them I perceive, with the first cast of mine eye, that adoration in spirit and in truth; in a word, that love, which alone is the whole law and the prophets.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Christian religion.

WHAT seems to me the distinguishing character of the true worship, is not to fear God in the manner as we fear a mighty and terrible man, who crushes every one that dares resist him. The heathens offered incense and victims to some peculiar deities whom they conceived mischievous and frightful, in order to appease them. This is not the idea I ought to have of God my Creator; he is infinitely just and almighty; he deserves indeed to be feared, but he is frightful only to those who refuse to love him, and to make themselves acquainted with him. The most

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reasonable fear we ought to be in about him, is that of displeasing him, and of not doing his will. As to the fear of his punishments, it is useful to men out of the right road, because it counterpoizes their passions, and helps to restrain their vices: but in short, his fear is only so far useful as it removes the obstacles, and, by removing those, disposes men to love. There is no man upon earth that would covet to be feared of his children without being loved by them at the same time; the bare fear of punishments will never sway a free and generous soul. When a man practises virtue from the only motive of that fear, without having any love for true virtue, he only practises it to avoid sufferings; consequently, if he could avoid punishment when he dispenses with the practice of virtue, he certainly would not practise them. Not only, there is no parent who cares to be honoured thus, nor a friend who will stile such his friends as were tied by no other bonds: but there is not a master, who would either reward servants, or have a kindness for them, or chuse them for his servants, if he found them attached to him by no other motive than fear, without any sentiments of love and good-will: with much more reason ought we to believe, that God, who has

made us capable of understanding, and of love, for no other end than that of being known and loved by us, is not satisfied with a slavish fear, but wills, that love, which flows from him as from it's spring, should return to him as it's end. I even conceive, that it is not sufficient to love God in the same manner we love all things that are convenient and useful to us: the end is not to put it out to our own advantage and satisfaction; on the contrary, we ought to deliver up ourselves indrely to him, willing our own good and advantage but in as much as it redounds to his glory, and is conformable to his will, and to the order he has established in the universe.

LETTER IV.

*Upon the idea of an infinite Being, and
of the liberty God was at, of creat-
ing, or of not creating the world.*

S I R,

THOUGH neither of us have yet the opportunity of seeing and knowing each other, I cannot help entertaining a good opinion of your merit from the letter you have favoured me with. I should be extremely pleased if I could make such an answer thereunto as would come up to your expectation; but I scarce dare hope for it, from the difficulty of the matter in question, and the little leisure I can spare for it. Before I enter upon the subject you propose, I desire you would give me leave to explain my general thoughts on philosophy, which may not be altogether useless to set the proposed questions in a better light.

I begin immediately, Sir, with stopping short in a philosophical debate, as soon as I meet with a point of faith that contradicts

some philosophical thought which I am tempted to approve.

Without hesitating in the least, I prefer God's reason to my own, and the best use which I can make of my small understanding, is to give it up to his authority. So that, without hearkening to myself, I only give ear to that revelation which the church hands down to me, and I deny all that the church bids me disown. If all the mathematicians in the world did unanimously agree in a particular demonstration of mathematics, and in their account of it to a man of sense, but ignorant in that science to a degree, as not to be even capable of understanding that demonstration; yet ought he to be deemed a prudent man for believing them upon their unanimous assertion: the best use he could make of his unlearned reason, would be to submit it to the superior and better informed judgments of so many learned men. Ought I not much more to submit my limited reason to the infinite reason of God? As soon as I conceive it thus, I am prepared to find infinitely more in him than what I am able to conceive. Thus in matters of religion, I believe, without reasoning, like a weak woman; and I know no other reason than

the authority of the church, which tenders me revelation. What disposes me more to this docility, is the repeated occasions I have to believe firmly, without any distrust, such truths as are absolutely incomprehensible to me. For example, whatever side I turn myself to, endeavouring to believe the divisibility of contiguous or continued substances *ad infinitum*, or to believe atoms, I find myself utterly incapable to make any intelligible answer to the objections, and I find myself under a necessity of believing what I do not understand, and is beyond me. And if I continually experience this in things purely natural, and in regard to the most despicable atoms, with how much more reason ought I to admit supernatural truths, of which I am informed by divine revelation, though my feeble reason cannot explain them to me? We are at every step, even in philosophical enquiries, obliged to admit without any scruple what is above reason itself, otherwise we should believe nothing at all that is about and most familiar to us. Doth a blind man refuse his belief to a seeing man who affirms to him, that there is light and variety of colours, because he can form no idea of either? ought I not to think myself as blind in respect to supernatural truths, as a blind man is

in respect to light and colours? Ought I not to be as docile to the authority of God, as a blind man is every day to that of clear-sighted men? Hence I conclude, that some people may pretend, they cannot conceive a proposition, and that their reason seems evidently repugnant to it; or else, that a certain proposition seems evident to them, and that they are not at liberty to deny their consent to it. I do deny and affirm, without the least hesitation, whatever religion proposes to me as an object of my belief or disbelief. I even go farther, I believe all propositions to which my reason leads me, though, when I am arrived to them, I cannot afterwards, by the strength of my reason, vanquish those objections, which I am tempted to hold for demonstrative arguments against those very propositions which I have embraced. After having declared to you, how docile I am to religious authority, I think myself obliged to let you know how indocile I am to any philosophical authority. Some are for making Aristotle the prince of philosophers; I appeal to reason, which is the judge between Aristotle and all other men. Others adjudge the precedency to Des Cartes; but I shall answer them, that I learned from Des Cartes himself, not to believe any body upon a bare as-

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sertion. Philosophy being nothing else but reason, men ought not therein to follow any other guide than reason. Would you have me believe any proposition in matters of philosophy; let us lay aside all great names, and look into the nature of the arguments. Give me clear and distinct ideas, and not quotations from authors liable to mistakes. If authority has any weight in philosophical matters, it is only to engage us from the esteem, for certain philosophers to examine their opinions more attentively. Des Cartes, who durst shake off the yoke of all authority to follow only his own ideas, ought himself to claim no authority over us. If I was to believe any philosopher, barely on account of his reputation, I would much rather believe Plato and Aristotle, who, for so many ages, were in possession of deciding all questions: I would even rather believe St. Austin, than Des Cartes, in matters merely philosophical; for besides that, he knew much better how to reconcile them with religion: we find, moreover, in that father, a much more extended genius concerning all metaphysical truths, though he never treated of them, but occasionally, and without method. If a man of learning and judgment was to put together all the sublime truths which St. Austin has

scattered throughout his works, as by mere chance; that abstract, carefully made, would be much superior to the so much cried-up Meditations of Des Cartes, though they really were the greatest production that philosopher was capable of.

I own to you, Sir, there are some things in Des Cartes, which to me seem little worthy of him; as, for example, his indefinite world, which is nothing but a ridiculous conception, unless it means a real infinite substance. His proof, of the impossibility of a vacuum, is a mere paralogismus, wherein he has followed his own fancy, instead of following ideas purely intellectual.

There are many other subjects wherein he has not attained to the nicest and strictest point of exactness; I speak it so much more freely, because I am rather otherwise prepossessed in favour of, and have a high esteem for the genius of that philosopher. I know there are abundance of ingenious men, who call themselves Cartesians, and, in my opinion, have embraced some too bold opinions, grounding themselves on Des Cartes's Principia: but without criticising or naming any body, I freely let every man reason as much as religion permits, and I take myself the liberty I grant to others, mistrusting, however,

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my own weak knowledge most sincerely. I own, it seems to me, that several philosophers of our own time, otherwise very esteemable, have not been exact enough in what they have said upon your two queries; the one, of the nature of the infinite Being; the other, of God's liberty in relation to his external works. Let us now, Sir, if you please, come to the examination of them.

QUERY I.

Of the nature of the infinite Being.

I CAN conceive but one infinite Being, that is, none but the infinitely perfect Being, or infinite in every kind. Whatever infinite, was infinite only in one kind, could not be taken for a true infinite. Whoever says one kind, or one species, doth manifestly imply a limit, and the exclusion of all and every ulterior reality; in which consists the very nature of a finite or limited being. That man has not studied, to the utmost point of nicety, the idea of the infinite, who has circumscribed and inclosed it within the limits of a kind. It is visible, that it cannot be found

but in the universality of that Being, which is the Being infinitely perfect in every kind, and infinitely simple; that is, free of all composition.

If it was possible to conceive infinite substances, limited to certain particular kinds, it might be truly said, that the being infinitely perfect in all kinds, is infinitely greater than those infinites; for, besides, that it would equal every one of those infinites in their several kinds, and would surpass each of them, by being equal to them altogether; it would, moreover, have a supreme simplicity, uncompoundedness, which would render it infinitely more perfect than that whole collection of pretended infinites.

Besides, each of those subaltern infinites would be limited exactly, where it's own kind was limited; and thereby make it unequal to that Being which is infinite in every kind.

Whoever says an inequality between two beings, doth necessarily indicate a particular place, where the one doth terminate, and the other doth not end; so that it is a contradiction to admit two unequal infinite beings.

I can even comprehend but one, since one only, by it's real infinity, excludes all limit in all kind, and fills itself the whole idea of an infinite Being: besides, as I have already

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observed, no infinite, that was not simple, could truly be stiled an infinite: the want of unity is an imperfection; for between two perfections, otherways equal, it is more perfect to be entirely one than to be compound; that is, than to be but a collection of particular beings. And it must be owned, that to be limited is an imperfection; therefore such an imperfection of divisibility is opposite to the nature of the true infinite, which has no limits. It may be thought, perhaps, that this is but a vain subtilty; but if men will but sincerely mistrust, and lay aside certain prejudices, they will easily be made sensible; that a compound infinite, is infinite only by name; and that it is actually and really limited by the imperfection of all divisible beings, and can only be reduced to the unity of a particular kind. This will be more evident, by making some very simple and very natural suppositions concerning those pretended infinities, in reality no more than compound beings. Give me a divisible infinite; it must needs have an infinite number of parts actually distinct from each other: take away from it a parcel as small as you please; as soon as it is taken off, I ask you, whether that which remains is still an infinite substance or not? If it be not infinite, I maintain, that the to-

tal, before the removal of that small parcel, was not a true infinite Being: see here the proof of it; no compound finite, to which you had re-joined a very small parcel, first taken from it, could become an infinite by that re-union; therefore it would remain finite after the re-union: consequently it was a truly finite being before the separation of that parcel. And indeed, what can be more ridiculous, than to dare say, that "the same whole, all, is sometimes finite, and sometimes infinite," according as you either remove from, or rejoin a sort of an atom to it? What! do the infinite and the finite differ only for having that atom more or less?

If, on the contrary, that whole remains infinite, after you have cut a small parcel from it, we must own, that there are infinites unequal to each other; for it is manifest, that this whole was bigger before, than since the removal of that parcel. It is clearer than the sun, that the removing of a part causes a lessening of the whole, in proportion to the bigness of that part. Now, it is a complete absurdity, to affirm, that the same infinite, continuing always infinite, is sometimes bigger, and sometimes less.

The side, from which you cut off a parcel, is visibly ended, or limited, where the par-

tel was cut off. The infinite is no longer an infinite on that side, since it there finds a remarkable end : that infinite is therefore imaginary ; and never can a divisible being prove a real infinite. Men, having the idea of the infinite, have applied it in a very improper manner, and contrary to the true idea of it to all these beings, which they would give no limits to in their kind ; but they have not observed, that every kind is in itself a limit, and that all divisibility, being an imperfection, which is likewise a visible limit, doth exclude the true infinite, which is a Being without limits in perfection.

Being, unity, truth, and goodness, are the same things ; so that whatever is an infinite Being, is infinitely one, infinitely true, infinitely good. Consequently it is infinitely perfect and indivisible.

Thence I conclude, that nothing is a greater contradiction than an imperfect infinite, and consequently a limited one : nothing more absurd than an infinite which is not infinitely one : nothing more inconceivable than an infinite not infinitely one : nothing more inconceivable than an infinite divisible, in several parcels, whether you call them finite or infinite. Those chimerical infinite substances may be imagined by some gross and unthinking peo-

ple, but never clearly conceived. It is even impossible there should be two infinities, for both put together must infallibly be bigger than each of them separately, and consequently neither the one nor the other could be a true infinite. Besides, the collection of those two infinities would be divisible, and consequently imperfect, whereas each of them would be indivisible and perfect in themselves; so that one single infinite would prove more perfect than the two together. If, on the contrary, we did suppose, that the two joined together would be more perfect than each of them separately, it would follow, that dividing would be degrading of them.

I conclude, therefore, that it is impossible to conceive more than one infinite, strictly one, true and perfect.

QUERY II.

Upon God's liberty of creating, or not creating the world.

UNDoubtedly, Sir, you judged rightly, that when I said it was a greater perfection in a being to be fruitful than not

to be so, I did not design to describe an actual production, but a virtue or power to produce out of itself: thus is it daily said, that a land is very fruitful, though it lie really fallow, because it is capable of producing the most plentiful crops. It may, perhaps, be objected, that the act is a greater perfection than the power, and that it is a greater perfection actually to operate, than to have only the power of operating: but this reasoning is fallacious, and to put it in a true light, I desire you will consider the following positions.

It is true, that in the school language, "the act perfects the power, and is the fulness of it." But see here all that is real in that assertion.

1st, Philosophers speak of the act as of a being distinct from power and action, and which is the end and limit of action itself. In that sense, the end is the fulness which perfects the power. No Cartesian can affirm this seriously.

2^{dly}, Whoever says pure power, or mere power, means a simple capacity of existing; on the contrary, act implies an existence, and a perfection already existing and actual. In a word, that which is only *in posse* is but possible, and what is already in act doth exist actually already. And is it not manifest,

that it is a greater perfection to be actually existing, than to be only *in posse*, or possible?

Pray observe, that the same being may, at the same time, be in power for some peculiar things, and in act for some others. It is what daily happens to all finite and created beings; for on one hand it is already in act for whatever it has already received of existence and action; but on the other hand, it is only *in posse*, for every thing it is yet to receive, and of which, by it's present existence, it has only the bare power or capacity to receive it.

In this sense it is again manifest, that it is a greater perfection to be in act than only *in posse*. But all this has no manner of relation to the power and the act of particular actions, which men are free to do, or not to do; and which sometimes they are in the right to leave undone. For example, I am not more perfect when I speak than when I do not speak; it even happens often that I am more perfect in being silent than in speaking.

The perfection consists in the power of doing that action, to which I make no addition by doing it; otherwise I should be blameable for not giving myself a perfection which was in my power, as often as I remain silent out of prudence.

It is true, that the soul is always in action;

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it always, at least confusedly, knows some truth or other, and in proportion wills some good action, but it is not necessitated to do any one particular action before another.

It is not true, according to the fore-mentioned example, that the action of speaking is in itself more perfect than the simple power of doing it.

If it is no greater perfection in man actually to perform such a thing than simply to have the power to perform it, this is yet more evidently plain in God; we must at least own, that every operation of the creature is a modification of it's own conferring. It is true, likewise, that it always operates, and consequently always modifies itself; sometimes one way, sometimes another; but when it chuses, the best operation that it gives itself by that choice, is the most perfect modification. It is not so with God. By his infinite, uncompounded, and immutable being he is incapable of all modifications; for a modification would be a limit; his operation is nothing but himself, without adding any thing to it. If his operation did add any thing to his perfection, he would not be God; for it would follow, that he would not have of himself infinite perfection independently of his action out of himself.

In that case, his operation without would be essential to his Godhead, and make part of it. Moreover, his outward work, which is no more than his creature, if it could not be separated from his fruitful operation; that work, I say, would be essential to his infinite perfection, and consequently to his Godhead: we should not be able to conceive the one without the other; the one would not depend upon the other. The creature would be essential to the Creator, and be confounded and mixed with him. The infinite perfection could not be found but in that total of God, operating without, and in his work. The creature being necessary to the Creator himself, from his essence, would cease to be a creature. We should be obliged to place it in the same rank with the persons of the holy Trinity, and, together with the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, make a fourth person of it. In that case, God should be necessitated eternally to produce whatever he was capable to produce most perfectly. He should himself be that production: he should be no longer God, than as he was actually doing it. He never could be at liberty not to do it, if we did not conceive him to have existence, at least one moment before he began to produce. We should be obliged to say, that when he

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began to produce, that then he began to make himself perfect, and to become God. In a word, the creature should be so essential to the Creator, that it would be impossible to make any real distinction betwixt them; and men would be accustomed not to seek for any other infinitely perfect Being, but that whole collective body of beings, called creatures.

What shall we do then not to fall into that monstrous impiety? We must say, that God is not more perfect, when he doth operate out of himself than when he doth not operate; because he is always almighty and infinitely fruitful; even when he is not pleased to exercise that fruitful power.

Thereby we know that God is free with a supreme liberty, of which ours is but a feeble resemblance, and a small share.

Thereby we know the gratitude which is due to the intirely free gift of the creation. Thereby we enter into the true spirit and meaning of the holy scripture, which tells us, that God finished his work in seven days: he did not do it at one simple act, he did break off in the midst of it; by little and little, and different degrees, did he bring his work to his proposed end: he gave it every day a new and particular form, and, in different tasks,

tasks, he gave it an increase of perfection. Every thing was each day found good and worthy of him, yet he made it still better afterwards, and more finished. Thereby he shewed how much he was the master of his whole work, so as to give as much and as little perfection as he should think fit. He might have stopped his hand after the production of a shapeless heap of matter, and he was free to make out of that mass the work full of variety and ornaments, which it pleased him to make, and is called, the universe.

Nothing, therefore, is more false than what I hear some people say, to wit, that the order of things, which is himself, doth necessitate God to produce every thing which he was able to form, most perfect. This reasoning tends to prove, that the actual production of God is eternal, and essential to the Creator. This reasoning would prove, that God could not withhold himself in any thing when he created the world, that he was no ways free to do it, but was forced to make it all at once, and even to produce it from all eternity. It would thence follow, that God was as much constrained, as to the manner of acting, as to the very bottom of his work. According to that principle, it was necessary,

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upon pain of violating order, and degrading himself, that he should produce his work, and perfect it in the simplest manner. In a word, if this principle holds true, God's omnipotence was exhausted in a moment. He cannot henceforth produce one simple atom more; he is absolutely incapable of adding the least degree of perfection to the meanest atom in the universe. If any thing is unworthy of God, it is such an idea of him.

How much more noble and justly doth St. Austin think about the Godhead? That father imagines to himself degrees of perfection, either infinitely ascending or descending, which God beholds at one single view. He sees none, that doth not remain infinitely below his own infinite perfection. He may rise as high as he pleases in finishing the plan of his work; his work must always remain infinitely below him. He may descend as low as he pleases, his work must always be good, perfect, according to it's measure, distinct from nothingness, and worthy of the infinite Being. God, chusing betwixt all those infinite degrees of perfection, doth call or not call nothingness to become a being, is bound to nothing, and calls all things. His infinite superiority above his work, makes, that he can have no manner of occasion for it: the

very glory, which he draws from it, is, as it were, so accidental, that it is within his own pleasure, and the pure choice of his will.

He has been at liberty to create the world as soon and as late as he has thought fit; but the soonest comes only after his eternity, and the latest is still followed by that same eternity, which remains entire and undivided.

In a word, whatsoever extent he had given to the duration of the universe, it still would have been something finite in the infinite; it would have been comprehended and inclosed in the indivisible eternity of it's author.

St. Austin, writing against the Manichei, represents that goodness of the work, and that liberty of the workman, as intirely depending upon his pleasure in what degree to fix it. In all things, says that antient father, there is nothing but the different degrees of existence, because to be, and to be perfect, is the very same thing.

It is by those different degrees that God diversifies his work: all that exists is good and perfect in a certain kind. That which is less, is less perfect; that which is more, is more perfect; but whatsoever is, in whatsoever low degree it be, is worthy of God, because it has a being, and there is occasion for an almigh-

ty wisdom to draw it out of nothingness. At the same time, every created being, howsoever perfect we conceive it, has but a limited degree of existence, to which it could not rise but by the almighty wisdom of him, who drew it out of nothing. Every creature, therefore, finds itself in that middle position, between those two extremes in the infinity of God himself.

God sees nothing that is not infinitely below himself. That infinite inferiority of all created beings, of the highest and the lowest degrees, puts them all in a sort of equality before his eyes. Not one of them has that superiority of infinite perfection as to prove to God an invincible argument why he should prefer it to others. At which degree of all he may stop, he always necessarily stops at such a one that proves finite, and infinitely below himself. That infinite inferiority is the reason why no possible perfection can have the force of compelling him: and his infinite superiority over all possible perfection, is the very constituent reason of this liberty in choosing. See here, Sir, what I imagine to have learned of St. Austin, about the liberty of God in the production of his works without himself. I wish I was at liberty to discourse with you more amply on all these subjects, and

I should, with as much pleasure, receive whatever you should be so kind to impart to me: for I do not question, but that you have deeply searched into them: but having under my care a large diocese upon the frontiers, where the war does much increase our troubles; enjoying but a weak state of health; and being besides much taken up with my controversial writings concerning grace, I cannot allow myself the leisure I could wish for meditating on metaphysics.

LETTER V.

*Concerning the truth of religion, and
it's practice.*

S I R,

IN my opinion you have three things to do: First, To set in as true a light as possible the fundamental articles of religion, if you should entertain any doubt about those, or should feel in yourself a want of a lively and distinct persuasion of them. Secondly, To examine your conscience upon your past conduct. Thirdly, To lay down to yourself the plan of a Christian-like course of life for the future.

I.

NOTHING truly solid can be objected against the truths of religion. A great number of them, and those the most fundamental, are conformable to reason. They are rejected only through pride, a petulant looseness of the mind, the luxuriancy of the passions,

and the fear of submitting to a yoke too cumbersome: for example, it is easy to perceive, that we have not made ourselves: that we have begun to be what we were not an hundred years ago: that our bodies, whose frame and matter is full of springs so aptly contrived, cannot but be the work of a marvellous industry and power: that the universe discovers, in all it's parts, the art of the supreme maker who has formed it: that our weak reason is every moment set right within us by another superior reason, which we consult, and which rebukes us; which we cannot alter, because it is unalterable; and which changes us, because we have occasion for it. All men, in all places, ask advice of it. It returns an answer in China, as well as in France or America. It is not divided by communicating itself. What it bestows on me of it's rays, robs none of those who were already filled with it. It lends itself out every moment without measure, and yet is never exhausted. It is a sun whose light enlightens the mind, as the visible sun does the body. That light is eternal and immeasurable. It comprehends all times, as well as all places. It is not myself, since it rebukes and corrects me, even contrary to my inclination: con-

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frequently it is above me, and above all such weak and imperfect men as I am. That supreme reason, which is the rule of my own; that wisdom from which every wise man receives what he has; that superior spring of light whence we borrow all, is the very God we are looking for. He exists of himself, and we have no being but through him. He has made us like unto himself; that is, reasonable creatures; that we might know him as the infinite truth, and love him as the immense goodness; that is, religion; for religion is love. To love God, and make other men love him, is the practice of the most perfect worship. God is our father, we are his children. The earthly fathers are not such fathers as he, they are the shadow of him. We owe him our knowledge, life, being, and all that we are. Shall we, who abhor ingratitude so much from man to man, on account of the least obligations, glory upon our monstrous ingratitude toward that father, of whom we have received the foundations of our being? Shall we incessantly use the gifts of his love, to violate his law, and to provoke him? These are the fundamental truths of religion, which reason itself points out and comprehends. Religion adds no more to our worldly probity, but the comfort, but the doing

out of love, and gratitude, for our heavenly Father, what reason itself requires of us to do, for the sake of virtue.

It is true, that religion proposes some other truths to us, which are called mysteries, and are incomprehensible: but ought we to be surprized that man, who knows neither the springs of his own body, which he uses every moment, nor the thoughts of his mind, which he cannot unravel to himself, should not comprehend the secrets of God? Shall we wonder that the finite cannot equal nor exhaust the infinite? We might say, that religion would not bear the character of the infinite, out of whose bosom it proceeds, if it surpassed in nothing but our short and feeble understanding. It is worthy of God, and fitted to our necessities, that our reason should be humbled and confounded by the overbearing authority of those mysteries we cannot penetrate into.

Besides, religion offers us nothing but what is consonant to reason, lovely, moving, worthy of admiration, in all that relates to the sentiments it inspires us with, and the moral virtues it requires of us. The only point capable of making our heart rebel, is the obligation of loving God more than ourselves, and

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to refer us intirely to him. But what is more just, than to return all to him from whom we receive all; and to return that self to him which we hold from him only? What is more unjust, on the contrary, than to be so backward in embracing so just and so reasonable an opinion? We must be strangely deviated, and of a corrupt nature, to rebel against so legitimate a subordination. It is that blind, untamed, insatiate, and tyrannical self-love, that covets all for itself, renders us idolatrous of ourselves, which makes us desire to be the centre of the whole world, and that God himself should serve no other turn than to flatter our vain appetites. It is that which is the antagonist of the love of God. This is the deep wound of our heart. This is the great principle of irreligion. When will man do himself justice? When will he take his own due place? When will he cease to love himself unreasonably; and but proportionably to what he is love-worthy; and prefer to himself not only God, who bears no comparison, but besides all public advantage to the society of other men, imperfect like himself? Once more, this is the total of religion, to know and to love God; "That is the whole man," as Solomon says. All the rest does not truly belong to man: it

is no more than man of a depraved, corrupt nature, degraded from himself; man losing all because he would foolishly secure all to himself; and who goes a-begging a false happiness from the creature, whilst he despises the true happiness which the Creator offers him. What is put in the room of that infinite good? Shameful pleasure, a phantom of honour; the esteem of those very men we despise.

When you shall have thus settled and rooted the principles of religion in your heart, it will be needful to examine your conscience, to repair the faults of your past conduct.

II.

THE first step towards that examination, is to put yourself in those dispositions you owe to God. Have you a mind to make a man of quality sensible, that he has committed faults against his worldly honour, in a manner unworthy of his birth? Begin with making him sensible of the noble and virtuous sentiments, which probity and honour ought to inspire him with; then will he have a most lively sense of the very least faults of that kind he shall have committed; he will make most bitter reproaches to himself about

it, he will be ashamed of it, and scarce admit of comfort. That we may be sorry for our faults, we must have printed in our hearts the love of those virtues, which are directly the opposite of those faults. Will you exactly discern the faults you have committed against God? Begin with loving him. It is the love of God that will enlighten you, and give you a lively sorrow of your ingratitude to that infinite goodness. Ask of a man who knows not God, and is indifferent towards him, in what he has offended him, you will find him grossly ignorant of his faults: he neither knows what God requires, nor in what particular we can be wanting to him. It is love only which gives us a nice discernment as to our sins. Open your eyes in a dark place, you will perceive nothing in the air; but open them near a window to the rays of the sun, you will discover even the least atoms. Learn, therefore, to know the goodness of God, and all that is due to him. Begin with loving him, and love will perform that search of your conscience, better than you can do it yourself. Love, and that love will be instead of memory to you, to make you tender, and at the same time comfortable reproaches about every thing you ever did against that very love. Behold a

lively and sincere return of friendship between two people that had differed, nothing escapes their notice of what had caused the rupture and dis-union of their hearts. You will ask me, how any body can give himself that love which he does not feel, chiefly when it is concerning an unforeseen object that never filled our fancy? I answer, Sir, that you daily love things you do not see. Do you see the wisdom of your friend? Do you see his sincerity, courage, disinterestedness, or his virtue? No! you cannot see those objects with the eyes of the body, yet you esteem them, and you love them, so as to prefer them in him to riches, graceful shape and mein, and every thing that could greatly please the eyes. Love God's wisdom and supreme goodness, as you love the imperfect wisdom and goodness of your friend: if you cannot come up to the same sort of love which you feel to sensible objects; at least, let your will desire to prefer him to all other beings, which is the very essential point of this love.

But this very love is not in your power, it does not depend upon yourself to give it you; you must desire it, ask it, wait for it, endeavour to merit it, and think it a misfortune to be without it. With St. Austin, you must say to God, with an humble heart, "*O an-*

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" tient, and yet always new beauty, I have
" known thee and loved thee too late! O!
" how many years have I lost? Whom
" have I lived for, since I did not live for
" thee?" The less you feel of that love,
 the more you ought to entreat God to kindle
 it in your heart. Tell him, you desire it
 with the same eagerness, as a starved beggar
 prays for a bit of bread. O! how poor is
 my heart! how is it reduced to beggary!
" O thou, who art so lovely, and yet so lit-
" tle beloved, cause me to love thee, call
" back, to it's centre, my misguided love!
" use me to be familiarly conversant with
" thee: draw me wholly to thee, that I may
" form a cordial friendship with thee, who
" art the only true friend. O God! what
" have I not loved besides thee! My heart
" is worn out in the most vicious passions. I
" am ashamed of what I have loved; and am
" yet more ashamed of what I have not lov-
" ed. 'Till now my food has been nastiness
" and poison: I have scornfully rejected the
" heavenly bread; I have despised the foun-
" tain of living waters; I have dug myself
" muddy and unwholesome springs; I have
" foolishly followed falshood, and have shut
" mine eyes to truth; I would not see the
" abyss of perdition just gaping in my way.

“ O my God ! thou hast not forgot him who
 “ was unmindful of thee : thou hast loved
 “ me, though I did not love thee ; and hast
 “ had compassion on my errors. Thou seek-
 “ est him who did shun thee.” As soon as

you shall be thus sincerely moved, every particular of that self-examination will become easy to you. The shells, as it were, will at once drop from your eyes : you will see through, with the piercing eyes of love, those things which no other eyes can distinguish ; then you must stop a while instead of going on too fast : ’till then it would have been in vain to attempt hastening you forwards ; self-love would have kept you back, with a thousand thoughts unworthy the worship of God.

As for the detail of your examination, it will not be difficult. Examine yourself in your several political and civil employments, as you are the lord of a manor, the general of an army, master of your servants, and a man of distinction and quality in the world ; then observe in what points you have been wanting to religion, by too bold discourses ; to charity, by speaking things detrimental to your neighbour ; to modesty, by immodest expressions ; to justice, by neglecting your affairs, and not paying your debts. Remember your gross passions, which, perhaps, have

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hurried you along ; your neighbour, to whom you have given a bad example, and of the scandal you have occasioned. When a man has, for a long time, lived up to his predominant passions far from God, it is almost impossible to remind every particular action ; but without that detail it is enough explained in a general muster, in accusing one's self of those vices, which have been habitual for the course of so many years.

III.

As to futurity, it behoves you to regulate the bottom of your heart, to regulate your conduct. Every one lives according to his desire. It is the object of every one's love, that determines and directs his conduct. When you loved nothing but yourself, and your pleasure, you trampled upon God. Luxury is become your God. You urged on your pleasures even to covetousness, as St. Paul expresses himself ; you were insatiable of sensualities, as covetous men are of money ; by desiring to possess yourself independently from God, to enjoy every thing without measure, you have lost all ; you have not truly possessed yourself, but only delivered yourself up to the tyranny of your possessi-

ons, and have almost entirely destroyed yourself. What a frenzy of self-love is this ! Return then, return to God ; he waits for you, he invites you, and extends his arms to receive you : he loves you much more than you know how to love yourself. Consult him in an humble manner, to know of him what it is he requires of you. Say to him what St. Paul said to him, with so much humility, at the instant of his conversion, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

When you are used to prayer, then with a deliberate and pious advice, make to yourself a plan of an easy and simple life, which you may be able to hold on, and which may put you out of danger of relâpses. Chuse such company as may be an indication of the change worked in your heart. A true friend of God can never chuse to live with his enemies. The more he feels in his heart a taste of the humour and conversation of the libertines, the more he will shun them, for fear of relapsing with them into libertinism. The least man can give to God, is to feel his frailty ; to mistrust himself after so many fatal experiments ; it is to avoid that danger, which he ought to think himself able to overcome. Make choice, therefore, of such companions with whom you may love God, become

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less fond of this world, and find your solid comfort in virtue. Avoid grimaces and affecting to be singular: let your piety be simple, entirely directed towards all the duties of the sphere you are in, and nourished with that courage, confidence, and peace, which are the fruits of a good conscience, and a sincere union with God.

Regulate your expences; take all the measures in your power to make your creditors easy; consider what good you are able to do in the place where you live; how much you can lessen irregularities and abuses, and stand by and support justice and religion.

Chuse such occupations in the interval of your affairs as may be useful. If you read, chuse useful subjects; read books of solid piety to comfort your heart, and good historians to divert yourself innocently.

But what I request of you above all, is to retire into your closet, the first half quarter of an hour every morning, and the last at night, to be in a hearty and familiar conversation with your God. You ask me, how you shall be able to compose a prayer? never fear, but if you are heartily in earnest, you will make an excellent one. In what manner are you used to speak to your friends? Is half a quarter of an hour's conversation with a friend

tedious? God is that faithful friend who is not tired with your refusals, whilst all other friends neglect you, because you leave off to be a partner of their pleasures. Tell him every thing, hearken to him on all accounts, re-enter often within yourself to find him there; *The kingdom of God is within yourself*, says Jesus Christ. We need not go far to fetch it, since it is so near to ourselves. He will like any thing; he desires only your heart; he wants no compliments, nor your studied or elegant protestations pronounced with heat or passion. If your imagination should wander and lose itself, return gently into the presence of God: do not make yourself uneasy; do not make of prayer a contention of the mind; do not look upon God as a master who is not to be approached otherwise than with a formal address, and troublesome ceremony. That liberty and familiarity which proceeds from love, will never lessen true respect and obedience. Your prayer will not be perfect, till you be more familiarly conversant, without constraint, with your true bosom friend, than you are with all those imperfect friends of the world. You ask me what penance you must do for your sins; I answer you, what Jesus Christ did to the adulterers; *I will not condemn you, but*

take heed to sin no more. Your chief penance ought to be patiently bearing afflictions, to be crucified with Jesus Christ, to loosen yourself from the bondage of this painful, miserable, frail life, and make a sacrifice of it to God, if required, with an humble courage. O the excellent penance to hold one's self under the hand of God between life and death ! Is it not repairing all the faults of a past life, to be patient under sufferings, and ready to lay down a life, when it shall please God, of which you had made so ill an use ? These, Sir, are the chief things which I would advise you to ; I desire you will receive them as the marks of my being sincerely

Yours, etc.

F I N I S.



